

S E R M O N S

ON

Several O C C A S I O N S,

BY

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V O L. XI.

The SEVENTH EDITION.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON, in *Ludgate-Street,*

MDCCXLIX.



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S E R M O N

*The Great Duty of Universal LOVE and
CHARITY.*

S E R M O N I.

Preach'd before the

QUEEN,

AT

St. JAMES's CHAPEL,
On Sunday, December the 30th, 1705.

Publiſh'd by Her MAJESTY's Special Command.

I JOHN IV. 21.

*And this Commandment have we from him,
that he who loveth God, love his Brother
also.*

THE true End and Deſign of Religion, is
manifeſtly this; to make Men wiſer and
better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their
Nature; to teach them to obey and love and imitate
God; to cauſe them to extend their Love and Good-
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ness and Charity to all their Fellow-Creatures, each in their several Stations, and according to the Measure of their several Abilities; in like Manner as the universal Goodness of God, extends itself over all his Works through the whole Creation: And to oblige them to govern the Passions of their Minds, with Moderation; and the Appetites of their Body, with Temperance. This is plainly the chief End and Design of true Religion. And whoever acts contrary to all or any of these great Rules, by wilfully dishonouring God, by hating his Brother; or by abusing and corrupting himself; is either a false and hypocritical Professor of the Truth, if he does these Things in Contradiction to the plain Rules, and in Defiance of the Laws of his Religion; or else the Religion which he professes, is itself a false and corrupt Religion, if he does any of these Things in Compliance with the Principles, and by permission of the Laws thereof. The Religion of the Church of *Rome*, is therefore a false and corrupt Religion; because, as it dishonours *God* by mixing Idolatry with Divine Worship, and gives Men too much Encouragement to corrupt *Themselves* and to indulge their vicious Inclinations and Habits, by allowing them, through many Superstitious Rights, to reconcile a wicked Life with the Hopes of Heaven; so it *particularly* permits, nay, and requires Men to hate and persecute their *Brethren*. And those whom, for want of the Arguments of Reason and Truth, they are not able to convince and bring over to their Party, they endeavour by all the Ways of Violence and Cruelty to root out and extirpate from among Men: As if the Religion of Christ was intended to divest Men of common Humanity, and the Service and Glory of God could

could in good earnest be promoted by the Destruction of Mankind. This is one of the greatest Corruptions of an excellent Institution, that can be imagined; when Religion itself, instead of promoting the universal Peace and Happiness and Welfare of Men, is made to authorize such Practises, the Prevention whereof is manifestly the chief and greatest End for which any Religion can reasonably be supposed to have been instituted at all. Particular Persons, under the Profession of the best and purest Religion in the World, may be led away with some Degrees of this Spirit of Errour; through a false Zeal, and a mistaken Judgment; as some of the *Apostles* themselves were for calling for Fire from Heaven upon the *Samaritans* who refused to entertain our Saviour: But the Christian Religion *it self*, the pure and uncorrupted Doctrine of our Saviour, is entirely opposite to this Spirit, and teaches us nothing but Love and Peace, Meekness and Charity, Patience and Forbearance one towards another. *If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; For this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.*

I N the following Discourse upon which Words, I shall endeavour, *First*, to shew briefly the great Obligation, which lies upon all Men in general, consider'd as Equals, to practise this excellent Duty of Love and Meekness, Patience and Forbearance one towards another. And, *Secondly*, I shall consider some of the principal and most remarkable Variations of this Duty, arising from the different Relations and Circumstances that Men stand in, one towards another.

I. As to the Obligation which lies upon all Men in general, consider'd as Equals, to practise this great Duty of universal Love, Meekness, and Charity ; 'tis evident

1st, THAT, by the Original Order and Constitution of *Nature*, Men are so made and framed, that they necessarily want one another's Help and Assistance, for their mutual Support and Preservation in the World. They cannot subsist, at least they cannot enjoy any Comfort of Life, independently on each other ; but are manifestly fitted by the very Frame of their Nature, to live in Communities ; and Society is absolutely necessary for them ; and the Bond of all Society, is mutual Love, Charity and Friendship. Now in this Respect, all Men naturally stand upon the same Level ; they have all the same natural Wants and Desires ; they are all in the same Need of each other's Assistance, and are equally capable of enjoying the Benefits and Advantages of Society. 'Tis manifest therefore that every Man, as he is a Man, is bound by the Law of his Nature, by common *Humanity*, to look upon himself as a Part or Member of that one universal Body or Community, which is made up of all Mankind ; to think himself born and sent into the World on purpose, to promote the publick Good and Welfare of all his Fellow-Creatures ; and consequently obliged, as the necessary and only effectual Means to that End, to embrace them all with universal Love, Charity, and Benevolence.

AND as all Men are obliged to this, by the necessary *Law and Condition* of their Being, and by all the outward *Circumstances* of the present State, wherein God has placed them ; so they are also strongly prompted to it by the *natural Inclinations* of their

their own Minds, when not corrupted by the Practice of Vice. For by Nature Men are plainly disposed to be kind and friendly, and willing to do good. Nothing is naturally more agreeable and pleasant to the Mind of Man, than being helpful and beneficial one to another. And, did they not suffer Covetousness and Revenge, and other foolish and absurd Passions, unreasonably to over-rule this their natural Disposition; they would universally enjoy the happy Fruits and Effects of it. For even in the present most corrupt State of the World, as far as their Vices will permit, Men still desire to keep up a general Commerce and Communication with each other; they love to encrease their Dependencies, by multiplying Affinities; and to enlarge their Friendships, by mutual good Offices; and to establish Societies, by a Communication of Arts and Labour and Industry. The only possible Means of preserving which Societies in any tolerable and durable Manner, being the Practice of mutual Love and universal Charity and Benevolence; shows plainly what the Direction and Tendency of uncorrupted Nature is.

No Man therefore can, without transgressing both the plain *Law* of his Being, and also acting contrary to the Reason of his own Mind and the natural *Inclination* of his uncorrupted Affections, do willingly any Hurt or Mischief to any Man: But every one is obliged for the publick Benefit, to endeavour to do good to all, and to love all Men even as himself. And upon what Occasion soever any Misunderstandings or Provocations may happen to arise, he ought immediately to endeavour to appease with Gentleness, rather than exasperate with Retaliations, and put an End to all Differences, as soon as possibly

he can. By this Means the World would become as happy, as 'tis possible for Men in this present State of Imperfection to be. And nothing hinders Mankind from arriving actually at this Degree of Happiness, but most *perverse* and most *unreasonable Iniquity*.

F O R, in order to bring about this great and excellent End, *viz.* universal Love and Friendship, and all the happy Effects and Consequences of it; nothing further is requisite, than that Men do to others in all Respects, what they would reasonably desire that others should in like Circumstances do to them. This is all that is really meant by loving others as themselves; and thus much they are manifestly obliged to, by the plainest *Equity*, and by the clearest *Reason* in the World. Every Man is desirous, and thinks it highly reasonable, that others should deal with *Him*, according to the Rules of Equity, Humanity and Friendship; that they should be tender of his Life, Estate and Reputation; that in Matters of Commerce, they should treat him with Justice, Fairness and Truth; that in Things wherein he stands in Need of their Assistance, and has good Ground to expect it, they should be willing to relieve him according to their Power; that in case of Ignorance or Mistake, they should be ready to inform him; and, where he has given any Offence, to forgive him upon his Desire of Reconciliation. This every Man thinks reasonable in his *own* Case; and therefore he is undeniably bound to think it reasonable likewise, when ever it be *another Man's* Case, to expect the like from *Him*. And if he does not act according to this Judgment; he is manifestly guilty of such Iniquity and Unrighteousness, as nothing but Custom in Wickedness and the

the Number of evil Examples could be able to support Men under, and harden them in the Practice of it, against the Shame and Self-condemnation of their own Minds. For, what is in itself fit and right to be done, every Man's own Conscience plainly tells him; and, whensoever he gives himself Time seriously to consider and review his Actions, it accordingly either applauds and commends him, and affords him great Pleasure and Satisfaction, from the Sense of his having answered the chief Ends of his Creation, and complied with the highest Obligations of his Nature, in having endeavoured to promote the universal Welfare and Happiness of Mankind, by the Practice of Truth and Righteousness, Meekness, Goodness and Charity; or else, on the other Side, it cannot but secretly reproach and severely condemn him, for having acted the contrary Part. Which Judgment of Conscience, though Men may indeed conceal from the World, and dissemble their Sense of the Weight of it upon their own Minds, in respect of their *own Actions*; yet it always discovers it self in the Censures they pass upon the *Actions of others*. For, how much Wickedness, and Uncharitableness, or Pride and Contentiousness soever, Men can overlook in *themselves*; yet there is no Man, but in judging of *others*, where his own Interest and Passions are not concerned, will rightly enough distinguish concerning the Characters of Persons, and the true Value of Mens Actions; will give just Applause and Commendation to Men of meek and peaceable and quiet Spirits, Lovers of Mankind, such as delight to do good, and to make all about them as easy and happy as they can; and, on the contrary, will freely condemn the Promoters of Hatred, Animosity, and Contention,

tention. All which plainly shows, both what the Law of our Nature, and what the original Inclinations of our Affections are, when not corrupted with the Practice of Vice.

2. As all Men are obliged thus by the necessary *Circumstances and Condition* of their Being, and also by the *original and natural Inclinations* of their own Minds, to love and to do Good to each other, according to their several Powers and Abilities : So they are still further and more strictly obliged to the Practice of the same Duty, in *Imitation* of the Nature, and in *Obedience* to the *Will and Law* of God. * *God himself is Love*, as the Apostle styles him ; an infinite and inexhaustible Fountain of never-failing Goodness : Who, being infinitely and eternally happy in the Enjoyment of his own unspeakable Perfections, could have no other Motive to create Things at first, but only that he might communicate his Goodness and Happiness to his Creatures ; and continues to preserve them for no other Reason, but that he may still continue to do good to them. † *He maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust : § Giving us from Heaven fruitful Seasons, and filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Now for the same Reason that God does *himself* continually delight in doing Good, and seems always to take especial Pleasure in describing himself by that particular Attribute of Love and Goodness ; for the same Reason it must necessarily be his Will, that all reasonable Creatures should imitate him in that excellent Perfection ; and by the Practice of mutual Love and Charity, permit and assist each other to enjoy in particular the several Effects and Blessings * 1 John iv. 8. † Matt. v. 45. § Acts xiv. 17.

of

of the Divine universal Goodness. God cannot but be pleased with such, who endeavour to conform themselves to the Likeness of his Divine Nature, and make it their Business, according to the Extent of their Power, and the Measure of their several Abilities, to promote the Welfare and Happiness of all their Fellow-creatures, in like Manner as the Love and Goodness and Mercy of God extends itself universally over all his Works through the whole Creation. He has given us noble Powers and Faculties on Purpose, to enable us to imitate him in the Exercise of these excellent Attributes. He has endued us with Reason and Understanding for that very End, that we might be able to discern between Good and Evil, and learn to choose the one and avoid the other. He has implanted in our Minds such Affections and Dispositions, as naturally incline us to be *kind and friendly and charitable* one towards another. He has so framed and constituted our Nature, and so ordered the Circumstances of our present State, as to make Society and Friendship necessary to the Support and Comfort of Life; on Purpose that Men might be continually exercised in the Practice of these divine Virtues. He has interwoven the Interests of Men, and made the Happiness of every particular Person depend upon the Welfare of the Publick; that each one, from the Sense of his own Wants and Exigencies, might see the Reasonableness and Necessity of making it his principal Business to do good to others. In fine; he has given us no other Way of expressing so acceptably our Love and Gratitude to himself, whom we ** have not seen*; as by loving and doing good to our Brethren, whom *we have seen*. For

* John iv. 21.

* *no Man hath seen God at any Time; but if we love one another, hereby we know that God, tho' invisible, yet really dwelleth in us, and that his Love is perfected in us, and that we dwell in him, and he in us, because we are Imitators of his Nature and Partakers of his Spirit. And thus much is clear even from the bare Light of Nature it self.*

BUT then, 3dly, The Christian Religion carries our Obligation to the Practice of this excellent Duty, still much higher. We are *Now* obliged to love and to do good to one another, not only by the Ties of common Humanity, as we are Men, and Partakers of the same common Nature; but we are further to look upon our selves as *Brethern* in a more peculiar and eminent Manner, being all the Children of God in Christ, all Members of the same Body, all Partakers of the same Spirit, all Heirs of the same blessed Hope of Immortality. † *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all.* Wherefore § *I beseech you, saith the Apostle, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called; with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love; endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

AGAIN: We Christians, have not only the Example of God's Love and Goodness in general proposed to our Imitation, as these excellent Attributes of the Divine Nature are made known to us by right Reason, and by the Light of Nature, and by our continual Experience of that good Providence which Presides over all, and does good to all, and manifests

* 1 John iv. 12, 13. † Eph. iv. 4. § Eph. iv. 1.
it

it self daily in all the Works of God through the whole Creation : But we have moreover the *Example* of God's Goodness and loving Kindness manifested to us in a more *particular* and extraordinary Manner, in that singular Instance of the Redemption of Mankind by the Death of his Son : Of which exceeding great and undeserved Mercy, we being all partakers, and having all our Hopes of Happiness founded upon it, are consequently under the strongest Obligation possible, to be in our Proportion kind and merciful and charitable to our *Brethren*, as God has been infinitely good and merciful to *Us*. This Argument is strongly urged by the Apostle St Paul, Col. iii. 12. *Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any Man has a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these Things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection; and let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body.*

LASTLY; As we are Christians, we are obliged to love and to do good to each other; not only by our knowing *in general*, from the Consideration of the Divine Nature and Attributes, that it must needs be agreeable to the Will of God that we should do so; but by having moreover received it, with singular Inforcement, as the *peculiar* Law and Command of our *Saviour*, on which he insists particularly, and seems to recommend it above all others, as the most absolutely necessary and indispensable Qualification of a sincere Christian. *A new Commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved*

loved you, that ye also love one another: John xiii. 34. And he makes it as it were the distinguishing Mark and Badge of his Disciples: By this shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one towards another. He himself, whilst he was here upon Earth, went continually about, doing good; and in so doing he has set us an Example, wherein he indispensably requires that we should follow his Steps. And accordingly we find the Apostles every where declaring, that universal Love and Charity, is the End of the Commandment, the principal Aim and Design of our whole Religion, 1 Tim. i. 5. That he that loveth his Neighbour, hath fulfilled the Law; For that all the Commandments are briefly comprehended in this Saying, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself, Rom. xiii. 8. And again; that all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself, Gal. v. 14. Inasmuch that whosoever wants this excellent Virtue; all his other Pretences of Religion whatsoever, and of Zeal for the Service of God, are declared to be vain and of no Value. If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lyar, 1 John iv. 20. And St Paul in like manner: Though I speak, saith he, with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity; I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal; That is, all my Pretences to Religion are false and empty. And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity; I am nothing. And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing; 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

And

And the Reason why so particular a Stress is laid upon the Practise of this great Duty of universal Love and Charity, is plain. Namely, because it is that Temper and Disposition of Mind, which is the highest possible Improvement and Perfection of our rational Nature. 'Tis that which makes our Souls like unto God, who is Goodness itself. 'Tis that which, in the Nature of the thing itself, is of the last and utmost Importance, as being naturally and necessarily the Condition and Ground both of our present Happiness and of that which is to come. 'Tis a Qualification of Mind absolutely necessary, to make us capable of the *Sight* of God, and of the *Happiness* of Heaven. For we must be *like God*, if we will *see him as he is*: And we must first attain that Disposition of Mind, wherein the Happiness of Heaven essentially consists, if we will hope to be Partakers of that Happiness. In a Word; that Frame of Mind which inclines us to do good, and to take Delight in doing it, is itself the Temper and Disposition of Happiness; and without this, 'tis no more possible for a rational Creature to be made Happy, than it is to alter the Nature and Essences, the necessary and eternal Reason and Proportion of Things. This is the plain and necessary Reason, why Love and Charity and Goodness, are constantly preferred before all other Virtues; as being the ultimate End and Design of Religion, and themselves a principal and necessary Ingredient of the Joys of Heaven. Almost all other Virtues, or Gifts and Excellencies whatsoever, are but as Means to this End; and to be *done away when that which is perfect is come*. *Hope*, is but the present Expectation, and *Faith* the firm Belief of those Things which shall be made manifest hereafter. And when that comes

to pass, then these Virtues, and all other Gifts which are in order to these, must necessarily and of Course cease. * *Whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away. But Charity and Goodness never fail.* These are Dispositions of Mind which are begun in the *Virtues* of this Life, and compleated in the *Glory* of the next; which will grow up with the Improvements of our Knowledge and Virtue here, to a perfect and unspeakable Happiness in the Enjoyments of the World to come.

AND now, could any Man, who seriously considered these Things, and was unacquainted with the Practise of the World, believe it possible, that Men, who professed that holy Religion which so plainly teaches this Doctrine of Peace, should yet so directly contrary to the whole End and Design of the Religion of Christ, (as is too plainly the Practise of the chief Propagators of the *Romish* Faith) indulge their Passions, their Pride, their Covetousness, their Ambition so far, as not only to be the Cause of Envyings, Strifes and Contentions, but even to make † *Wars and Fightings*, necessary among Christians; to the infinite Scandal of our most holy Religion, in the Sight of *Jews and Turks and Pagans*; among whom the Name of God is blasphemed through Us, as it is written; Rom. ii. 24. Could such a one believe it possible, if it was not too manifest in Experience; that Men who call themselves Christians, should oppress and bite and devour one another, and not be afraid of the Apostles threatening, that they should § *be consumed one of another*? And is it not still much more absurd, that Religion it self, that the Religion of Christ, the Religion

* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. † James iv. 2. § Gal. v. 15.

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gion of Peace and Love, which was intended to reconcile Men to God and to each other, should it self be made the Occasion of Hatred, Animosities and Contentions; nay, of the greatest Oppressions and most inhumane Cruelties? In a Word that Pretences of Religion *it self*, should produce in Men that Spirit, for the preventing whereof all Religion was principally and ultimately intended? I shall conclude this Head with those remarkable Words of the Apostle St James, James iii. 13. *Who is a wise Man, and endued with Knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his Works with Meekness of Wisdom. But if ye have bitter Envyings and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth. This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil Work. But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, &c.*

II. IT remains that I proceed in the 2^d Place to consider briefly some of the principal *Variations* of this great Duty, arising from the different Relations and Circumstances which Men stand in one towards another.

AND here the Practise of this Duty is *diversified* as many Ways, as there are different Stations, or different Circumstances and Conditions of Men in the World. I shall only mention these following; from which all the rest may easily be deduced.

1st; WHAT this great Duty of Love and Charity obliges us to, in respect of our Behaviour towards *Superiours and Inferiours.*

2dly, H o w it obliges us to behave ourselves towards our *Enemies*, or those who have done us any particular Injury. And

3dly, H o w it obliges good Men to behave themselves towards those, who are either *neglecters or despisers of Religion* in general, or so unhappy as to be involved in some particular *great and pernicious Errors*.

1st, I N respect of our Behaviour towards *Superiors*; the Duty of *universal Love* is to shew forth it self in hearty, willing and cheerful Obedience to the Commands of those whom God has set over us: In delighting to promote their Honour, and to increase amongst Men that Duty and Respect, which is due to Authority: In thinking them that *rule well, worthy of double Honour*: And (because all Government is a Burden, as well as an Honour; therefore) this Duty particularly obliges us to endeavour to make that Burden as light and easy as we can, by a careful and diligent and conscientious Discharge of our several Duties, each in our respective Stations; so as unanimously to promote all the Ends and Designs of good Government, the Execution of wise and wholesome Laws, and the Peace and Prosperity of the Publick.

I N respect of our Behaviour towards *Inferiors*; the Duty of *Christian Love*, is to show forth it self in just and righteous and merciful Dealings; in readily relieving the Necessities of those that want; in delivering and vindicating the oppressed; in instructing the Ignorant and those that are in Error; in reproving the Wicked, and, by good Example as well as good Advice, persuading and bringing them to a better Mind: In a Word, doing all the Good we can, both
to

to the Souls and Bodies of men ; in imitating of our Saviour, *who went about doing good.*

N o w by how much the greater any Man's Power or Riches, Interest or Authority is, and by how much the higher his Station is in the World ; by so much the greater is his Power of doing good ; and by so much the more glorious is his exercising and employing his Power to that excellent and noble End. And here is the true and immortal Glory of wise and good Princes, that as they represent God in the Exercise of Power and Authority in the World, so they resemble him also in the Application of that Power to serve the Ends of Virtue and Goodness in promoting the publick Happiness of Mankind. Power is not desirable for its own Sake, any more than Wisdom and Knowledge ; but only for the Sake of that greater good, which it enables Men to do in the World. And to abuse Power to the enslaving and destroying of Mankind, and to the serving such Purposes, the preventing whereof is indeed the only good Reason for which Power is truly desirable ; is the greatest Weakness and Absurdity in the World. To employ great Power and Riches in conquering and subduing many Nations, in causelessly oppressing Multitudes of People, and subverting the common Rights and Liberties of Men, is the greatest Folly, as well as the greatest Wickedness, imaginable : And nothing can be more weak and contrary to Reason, than to call that Ambition by the Name of Glory and Greatness, which is really the most inglorious and the most dishonourable Thing in Nature. God is the supreme Governor of the World, possessed entirely of absolute and uncontrollable Power : Yet he makes Use of that Power to no other End, but to preserve and support and do good

to all his Creatures, according to their several Natures and Capacities. *He is good, and does good*; and esteems Goodness his greatest Glory and Perfection, the Title which he most delights to be described by. True Greatness therefore, is to imitate God in this most glorious Perfection of Goodness. And those whom he has endued with Power and Authority to represent him on Earth, are then most truly and illustriously his Vice-gerents, when they look upon a large Extent of Power, to be only a greater Compass of doing good; when they imitate God, in being Lovers and Preservers of Mankind, and making Government a Protection and Security to all that live under it. And if beyond this, they be still further enabled to restrain the Fury of Oppressors abroad, and to be Vindicators of the common Rights and Liberties of Nations; this is still a higher Degree of true Honour and Greatness, and a becoming really the Praise and Glory of the whole Earth. How unspeakably happy is that People, on whom God has vouchsafed to bestow so inestimable a Blessing! And how thankful ought we to be, that the Description of such Felicity, is at this Time the exact Description of our own Case!

2dly, IN Respect of our Behaviour towards our *Enemies*, or those who have done us any particular Injury; the Duty of universal Love and Charity, is to shew forth itself in a willing and ready Disposition to forgive them upon their Repentance and desire of Reconciliation. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: And if he trespass against thee seven Times in a Day, and seven times in a Day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him, Luke xvii. 3.*

This,

Thus, we Christians are in a particular Manner obliged to, by the Example of God's much greater Goodness and Compassion towards *Us*. Since God has forgiven us all, our *ten thousand Talents*; nothing can be more reasonable in the Nature of the Thing itself, than that we should be moved by that Example, to forgive one another *freely our hundred Pence*; and to have Compassion each on *our fellow-servants*, as God has had Pity on *Us*. But besides the Reasonableness of the Thing itself, God has moreover made it the express Condition of our own enjoying the Benefit of *His* gracious Pardon: For, *so likewise*, saith our Saviour, *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases*, Matt. xviii. 35. And accordingly we are directed even in our daily Prayer, to ask Forgiveness at the Hands of God; only upon such Condition, and in such Manner, as we forgive one another our Trespases. And this is, upon Supposition of our Enemies repenting: But if they do not repent, yet even still we are obliged to *love and bless them*, to *pray* for them, and take all Opportunities of *doing good* to them; after the Example of our heavenly Father, who doth good even to the Evil and Unthankful. Nevertheless, all that is said upon this Head, is to be understood of *private*, not of *the publick* Enemies; against whom neither the Laws of Nature nor of Christianity, have provided any other Way of securing our selves, than by endeavouring to deprive them of the *Power* of hurting *Us*.

Lastly, I N respect of the Behaviour of good Men towards those who are either Neglecters and Despisers of Religion in general, or so unhappy as to be involved in some particular great and pernicious Errors; the

the Duty of universal Love and Charity, obliges us to endeavour by all the Ways of Gentleness, Instruction and Reproof, to bring them to Repentance and a better Mind. Magistrates indeed, and those who are placed in Authority, may and ought to make use of Punishment and Severity, towards those who are guilty of such Crimes, as are destructive of humane Society; and the strict Execution of Good Laws, is in that Case an Instance of the greatest Love and Charity to the Publick. But otherwise, 'tis the Duty of
** a Servant of the Lord, not to strive, but to be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth* †. For, *the Wrath of man worketh not the Righteousness of God*: And our Saviour himself severely condemns That Spirit, which some of his Disciples discovered, when they desired to call for Fire from Heaven, upon the *Samaritans* who refused to give him reception. Such Persons as are not yet come to have a right Sense of Religion *in general*, 'tis our Duty to persuade by Reason and Arguments; to convince them of the Being, Attributes and Providence of God; of the Necessity and infinite Importance of Religion; of the unalterable Difference of Good and Evil; of the Reasonableness, Excellency, and positive Evidence of the Christian Revelation. And those who are so unhappy as to be involved in any *particular* pernicious Errors, 'tis our Duty to inform, instruct, reprove, and by all Christian Means endeavour to bring them back to the Acknowledgment of the Truth: Taking Care above all Things, to show them by our good Examples, and by the

* 2 Tim. ii. 24.

† Jam. i. 20.

Universal Love and CHARITY. 21

Influence of the Truth upon our own Lives ; that we have no other Design in endeavouring to convince them, but theirs and our own Salvation. In promoting which Ends we shall do well to have always imprinted on our Minds those excellent Words, wherewith St *James* concludes his Epistle : *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him ; let him know, that he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.*

SER.

Influence of the Truth upon our own Lives; that we have no other Design in such writing to convince them, but theirs and our own Salvation. In promoting which Ends we shall do well to have always in our Minds those excellent Words, wherewith St James concludes his Epistle: Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only; for he that hears, and doeth not, is like unto a Fool; for he knoweth that he is judged by the Law, and shall abide a doer of the Law, and shall abide a doer of the Law.

S E R M O N II.

Preach'd at the FUNERAL of

MARY Lady COOKE,

Late WIFE of

Sir John Cooke, of Doctor's-Commons,
London, Knight, Doctor of L A W S,
&c.

On Tuesday, October 11, 1709.

2 C O R. V. 8.

*We are confident I say, and willing rather
ther to be absent from the Body, and to be
present with the Lord.*

THE Apostle in the foregoing Chapter declares at large how the Assurance of a Resurrection from the Dead, not only enabled him to perform cheerfully all the Duties of a Christian Life, but supported him also, so as not to faint under the severest Persecutions, which continually threatened

threatned him even with Death itself. *Therefore as we have received Mercy, saith he, we faint not, ver. 1. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplex'd, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, ver. 8, 9. The Ground of which Comfort and Support, he expresses, ver. 10. Always bearing about in the Body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal Flesh; for we which live, are always delivered unto Death for Jesus sake, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal Flesh. And more clearly, v. 13, 14. Having the same Spirit of Faith——, and knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. After which he returns to the Inference he began with in the first Verse; v. 16. For which Cause we faint not, but tho' our outward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day; for our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory; while we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen; for the Things which are seen, are Temporal; but the Things which are not seen, are Eternal.*

FROM this general Consideration of the Certainty of a future Life, as a Ground of Support and Comfort under the Troubles of the present; he proceeds in the beginning of the fifth Chapter, to consider the particular Nature of *that Body* we shall be clothed withal at the Resurrection; and of that intermediate State, the Soul will find itself in, between Death and Judgment. As to the Nature of our future *Body*, he tells us, *v. 1. that whereas our present Body is an earthly House,*

House, a Building fram'd out of the most perishable Materials, and of a Texture most frail and brittle ; a *Tabernacle* tending perpetually in its own Nature by a gradual Decay towards a *Dissolution*, and during that short Period which it is capable of continuing, being every moment liable to be destroy'd by sudden Violence, by the Power of Men, and by the Assaults of acute Diseases : The Body we shall have hereafter, shall on the contrary be a *Building of God*, an *House not made with Hands*, eternal in the Heavens ; a Body, fram'd immediately by God himself, made capable of enduring for ever, and fitted to the Circumstances and Enjoyments of that Place, which God has provided for it in the Heavens.

The frequent Meditation upon which happy State, causes good Men to groan earnestly, ver. 2. *desiring to be cloathed upon with our House which is from Heaven ; if so be that being cloathed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened ; not for that we would be uncloathed, but cloathed upon, that Mortality might be swallow'd up of Life.* This Passage some understand to refer to what the same Apostle informs us of, in the 15th Chapter of his foregoing Epistle, concerning those who shall be found alive at our Lord's second Coming ; that they shall not die, but be changed ; not be uncloath'd of this mortal Body, but cloath'd upon with their heavenly Habitation ; and that the Apostle here expresses a Desire of escaping Death, and of being found among those, who, without becoming naked, without being separated from the Body at all, shall in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, be changed, or cloathed upon with an immortal and incorruptible Body. But there is no need of interpreting the Words

to this Sense. For when the Apostle affirms, that we are desirous, not to be *uncloathed*, but to be *cloathed upon*; not to be found *naked*, but to be *cloathed upon with our House which is in Heaven*; he does indeed prefer our *State after the Resurrection*, to the *State of Separation*; and represents good Men wishing to be deliver'd from the Burden of the Flesh, not merely for the Sake of being separate from the Body, but chiefly and principally in Hopes of being cloathed with a better and more glorious one. But yet it does not therefore follow, that he meant to extend this Desire so far as to the escaping of Death wholly, and the avoiding to enter into the separate State at all; or that he thought this peculiar Circumstance of those who shall be found alive at the Lord's second Coming, could possibly be the Case of those who lived so early as in his own Time. Nay rather the contrary seems clearly to follow from the 6th Verse, and from the Words of the Text; where he speaks of *being absent from the Body*, as of a Thing that would certainly happen to them, and which was truly desirable to good Men; and the Expectation whereof was a Ground of Confidence and Support under the Troubles of Life, and against the Fears of Death; Because though the State after the Resurrection, when we shall be cloathed with incorruptible and immortal Bodies like unto our Saviour's glorious Body, shall be much more happy and desirable, than the State of Separation; yet that State of Separation it self, that imperfect and incomplete State, is far superiour to our Condition in this World, and more eligible than the Burden of the present Flesh. Therefore we are always confident, says he, knowing that whilst we are at Home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord: (for

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we walk by Faith, not by Sight; we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord.

THE Words are not well rendered, *whilst we are at Home in the Body.* For this Body is not our proper Home; we are only Strangers and Pilgrims in the present World; and our Life is by St. Peter justly call'd, *The Time of our sojourning here.* But, whilst we dwell in the Body, (so the Words ought rather to be rendred,) or (as the same Word is translated in the following Verse,) *whilst we are present in the Body; whilst we continue in this World; we are absent from the Fountain of Life and Happiness: We are at a Distance from the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our proper Country; we are absent from the Lord; and live by Faith only, not by Sight.* But, God having given unto us the earnest of his holy Spirit, *we are confident and have full Assurance of the Truth of these Things: We wear ourselves therefore from the sensual Injoyments of the present World; we support and comfort our selves with these Meditations, under the Troubles of Life, and against the Fears of Death; we are willing rather to be absent from the Body, (whensoever it shall please God to release us;) and to be present with the Lord, which is far better.*

IN the Words, and in the Context, we may observe the following Particulars plainly implied.

1st, THAT we must all shortly be absent or separate from this Body.

2^{dly}, THAT this State of Separation, is not a State of absolute Insensibility.

3^{dly}, THAT, to good Men, it is a State of great Happiness, a being present with the Lord.

4thly, **T**HAT the Consideration of that intermediate Happiness, is a great Comfort and Support against the Fear of Death. *We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the Body.*

5thly and Lastly, **T**HAT this intermediate State, tho' it may be a State of Happiness, yet is by no Means equal to that Happiness which good Men shall be possess'd of after the Resurrection. *For we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclatbed, but clatbed upon, that Mortality, might be swallowed up of Life.*

1st. 'TIS supposed in the Words, that we must all shortly be *absent* or separate from this Body. 'Tis evident there is no need to *prove*, and one would think there should be no need to *remind* Men, that they must all die; when they have every Day such mournful Occasions as these, to excite their Consideration. Yet so it is, that even *this very Thing*, the Frequency of other Examples and the indisputable Certainty of their own Mortality, makes them stand in need of the more earnest Exhortations, to persuade them not to forget or neglect it. For as the strongest Objects that make perpetually an equal and continued Impression upon constant Presence, do affect us little more, than if they made no Impression upon the Sense at all; and as those great *Phænomena* of Nature, which we observe to return in the constant Course of every Day, excite in us less Admiration, tho' in themselves the most wonderful of all the Works of God, than Things much less remarkable, which appear but seldom: So the absolute Certainty of our own Mortality, which leaves no Room for Inquiry or Debate, makes Men almost as much lay aside the Thoughts of it, as if the Certainty were on the other

other Side of the Question ; and the frequency of Instances which ought perpetually to remind us what we must speedily expect, does by a strange Carelessness and habitual Neglect, reconcile Men in such Manner to the Sight of Mortality in others, as if they themselves were not concern'd in the Example. They shake off the Thought of it, as if there could be no Benefit in meditating upon what cannot be prevented ; and they look upon it as impertune and troublesome to remind them of that, which 'tis not possible but they must already know, yet that Knowledge, without Meditation, is like unto Ignorance ; because it has no Effect, and makes no Impression. 'Tis like the speculative Knowledge of a Truth, which concerns us not ; or like the habitual Understanding of a Demonstration, never recollected. The Reason of this great Stupidity, seems to be the Uncertainty of the Time of every Man's Death ; which makes Men look upon Life, as a long indefinite Period ; and, because the Time of their Death is uncertain, 'tis to them as an Uncertainty in the Thing it self. To prevent this Folly therefore, the Scripture is perpetually reminding us, and putting us upon considering, that *our Days on Earth are as a Shadow, and there is no abiding,* 1 Chron. xxix. 15. *That they are swifter than a Weaver's Shuttle,* Job vii. 6. *That they are swifter than a Post ; that they flee away as the swift Ships, as the Eagle that hasteth to the Prey,* Job ix. 26. *That they are as a Sleep, as a Watch in the Night, as a Tale that is told,* Psalm xc. 5, 4, 9. *That our Life is a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away,* James iv. xiv. *That Man cometh forth like a Flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a Shadow, and continueth not,* Job xiv. 2. In

the Morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the Evening it is cut down and withereth, Psalm xc. 6. All which Similitudes are elegantly summ'd up together by the Author of the Book of Wisdom: Wisd. v. 9. All these Things are passed away like a Shadow, and as a Post that basted by; and as a Ship that passeth over the Waves of the Water, which when it is gone by, the Trace thereof cannot be found, neither the Pathway of the Keel in the Waves; or as when a Bird has flown thro' the Air, there is no Token of her Way to be found——; or like as when an Arrow is shot at a Mark, it parteth the Air, which immediately cometh together again, so that a Man cannot know where it went thro'; even so we in like Manner, as soon as we were born, began to draw to our End, and have no Sign of Virtue to shew. These Descriptions of the Vanity and Transitoriness of human Life, are too evidently true, to stand in need of any Proof. Yet the Riches and Honours, the Pleasures and Allurements of the World, hinder Men too usually from considering them; and Men act as if they were to live here for ever. Providence therefore is very kind to us, in sending Afflictions upon us to awaken us out of this Lethargy; and we should be very Wise and Just to our selves, if we would suffer our selves to be brought to serious Consideration by the Troubles and Afflictions of others. When we see others taken out of the World before us, we know their Case must in a short Time of Necessity be our own; and the Concern we always see dying Persons under, should make us endeavour without Delay in the Time of our Health and Strength, to lay the Foundation of a good Conscience against the Day of Tryal. We are sure Eternity can never be very far distant from any
of

of us; and we are always uncertain, but it may possibly be very near. And when Death approaches, Sickness and Pain are alone a Burden sufficient; and it will require all the Helps of Reason and Religion, all the Strength of the *Spirit of a Man*, to *sustain* at that Time the *Infirmities* of Nature. But if the *Spirit* itself be wounded; if the Conscience be distracted with too just Fears; if the great Work of Religion be then *undone*, and yet impossible to be *done*; if the *Spirit* of the Man, which should *support* him under his Infirmary, does it self much more stand in need of *Comfort and Support*; *who can bear it?* This is the Time when all false Colours vanish, and the great Difference and Distinction of Men begins truly to appear. Now the Profane, the Covetous, the Voluptuous, the Mockers and Scoffers at Religion, begins to judge by other Measures; and *if God should require some great Thing* of him, *would he not do it?* On the contrary, the Sober and Pious, the Righteous and just Person, reflects then with unspeakable Comfort upon his past Life; when he remembers that he has either liv'd always innocent from great Crimes; or at least that the Sins of his Youth have not been so great, as the Repentance and Obedience of his wiser Age. And when the Vail is removed by Death, which transmits these different Persons to that State, where they are to wait for the final Sentence of the unerring Judgment of God; they themselves will judge still more and more clearly concerning the true Nature of Things, and of their own Deserts. For Death is not a total Extinction of the Man, but a Separation only of the Soul from the Body for a Time. Which was the next Particular I propos'd to discourse of. And here, for Brevity Sake, I shall put the

Second

Second and Third PARTICULARS into one: *viz.* That the State of Separation, is not a State of absolute Insensibility, but to good Men a State of great Happiness, a being *present with the Lord*. All the *Natural Arguments*, (for the *Moral Arguments* indeed prove only a future State in general, by the Resurrection of the *Body*, or *otherwise*;) all the *Natural Arguments*, I say, which prove to us by Reason the Spirituality and Immortality of the Soul, seem to prove no less strongly, that the separate State is not a State of Sleep or Insensibility. For if it is a good Argument to conclude with *Cicero*; *when I consider*, says * he, *with what Swiftneſs of Thought the Soul is endued, with what a wonderful Memory of Things paſt, and Forecaſt of Things to come; how many Arts, how many Sciences, how many wonderful Inventions it has found out; I am perſuaded that That Nature, which is Poſſeſſor of ſuch Faculties, cannot be Mortal*: If this, I ſay, be a good Argument, (and a very excellent one it is;) it ſeems no leſs juſt to infer with *Cyrus in Xenophon*: *I cannot imagine*, ſaith † he, * *Quid multa? Sic mihi perſuaſi, ſic ſentio; quum tanta celeritas animorum ſit, tanta memoria præteritorum, futurorum providentia, tot artes, tantæ ſcientiæ, tot inventa; non poſſe eam naturam, quæ res eas contineat, eſſe mortalem. Cic. de ſenectute.*

† Ουτοι ἔγωγε, ὦ παῖ, εἰδὲ τῆτο πώποτε ἐπείσθην, ὡς ἡ ψυχὴ, ἕως αὖ ἐν θνητῷ σώματι ἦ, ζῇ· ὅταν δὲ τῆτε ἀπαλλαγῇ, τέθνηκεν. — Οὐδὲ γε ὅπως ἄφρων εἶναι ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπειδὴν τῷ ἄφρονι σώματι διχα γίνηται, εἰδὲ τῆτο πέπεισμαι. Αλλ' ὅταν ἀκράτῃ καὶ καθαρός ὁ νῦς ἐκκρίβῃ, τότε καὶ φρονιμώτατον εἶκος αὐτὸν εἶναι. *Cyrus apud Xen.*

that

that the Soul while it is in this mortal Body, lives; and that, when it is separated from it, then it should die: I cannot persuade myself, that the Soul, by being separated from this Body, which is devoid of Sense, should thereupon become it self likewise devoid of Sense: On the contrary it seems to me more reasonable to believe, that when the Mind is separated from the Body, then it should become most of all sensible and intelligent. But these were only the reasonable Conjectures of wise and considering Men. The Scripture assures us with more Certainty and Authority, that *blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them*, Rev. xiv. 13. Which Rest, that it is not the mere Rest of utter Insensibility, may be gathered from chap. vi. ver. 9. where 'tis said, *I saw under the Altar the Souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud Voice, &c.* The same Thing is intimated to us by our Saviour, in the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*; where the Soul of *Lazarus* is represented as carry'd by Angels into *Abrabam's Bosom*, and that he was comforted in that Place, Luke xvi. 22, 25. And more clearly yet, in his Promise to the Penitent Thief, Luke xxiii. 43. *Verily I say unto thee, to Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* To Day, that is, immediately, in the State of Separation, before the Resurrection of Christ, and his Ascension into his Kingdom. St Paul had such a Notion of the Happiness of that State, that tho' his abiding in the *Flesh* he knew was better for the Church, yet he was in a Strait between two, having a Desire to depart and to be with Christ, which was far better for himself, Phil. i. 23,

24. And in the Text he declares; *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by Faith, not by Sight: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord.* The present Life he calls, *walking only by Faith*; the State after Death, *walking by Sight, or being present with the Lord.* And accordingly all the best Writers in the Primitive Times, when they have Occasion to mention the State of good Men departed, always speak of them as being * *in the Place appointed for them with the Lord*; as † *beholding our Saviour in Paradise, after such a Manner as they are worthy to behold him*; as being in a Place of Rest, Refreshment, Comfort, and Expectation of the Completion of their Happiness at the Resurrection. Directly contrary to the Innovations of the Church of Rome, who, without any Appearance of Reason, and without any Colour of Authority from Scripture, teach that the Souls of good Men are tormented in a Purgatory of imaginary Fire, very little differing from that of Hell itself. How much better does even a Jewish Writer express himself upon this Subject! *Wisd. iii. 1. The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no Torment touch them. In the Sight of the Unwise they seemed to die, and their Departure is taken for Misery; and their going from us, to be utter Destruction; but they*

* Εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ. Polycarpi Epist.

† Πανταχῇ γὰρ ὁ Σωτὴρ ὁραθήσεται, καθὼς ἄξιον εἶναι αἱ ὁρῶντες. Irenæus, lib. 5.

are in Peace. For tho they be punish'd in the Sight of Men, yet is their Hope full of Immortality.

4tly, THE Consideration of the Soul's intermediate Happinefs in the separate State, is a great Comfort and Support against the Fear of Death: Therefore we are confident, says the Apostle, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord. 'Tis some Degree of Comfort against the Fear of Death, to consider that it is the Necessity of Nature, and the Appointment of God to all Men; Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed unto Men once to die. 'Tis some further Degree of Support, to consider that Death is as it were the Haven of Rest, from the Storms and Troubles, the Calamities and Sorrows of the World: Job iii. 17. There the Wicked cease from troubling, and there the Weary be at Rest; there the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor: The Small and Great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master. But after all the Arguments of Comfort that can be drawn from Reason and Philosophy, Death is still the King of Terrors to Nature, and is become much more so thro' Sin. But Christ has now, to all such as repent and truly amend, taken away that Sting, and removed the Fear; having destroyed him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil; and delivered them, who thro' fear of Death, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage. Heb. ii. 15. Death is now abolished, to all good Men, 2 Tim. i. 10. and become nothing else but a Passage to a glorious Immortality. And 'tis a great Addition of Comfort and Support, to consider that even that Passage itself is not a dark Passage thro' a State of utter Insensibility; but a being

a being present with the Lord in some Degree of Communication, and Fore-taste of a more perfect Happiness.

THE pious Lady, whose Death we now lament, took particular Satisfaction in meditating frequently upon this Subject; and in enquiring into the full Extent and Signification of those Texts, which relate to it. She made the holy Scriptures her daily Study and Delight, and was much conversant in many other excellent Books of Piety and Devotion: and the Comfort such Studies administer against the Fear of Death, is then truly effectual, when 'tis applied by such Persons, as are prepar'd to receive it by the preceding Course of a holy Life. For the space of two Years wherein Providence allotted me to perform the Duties of my Ministry in the Parish wherein she dwelt, (and wherein I receiv'd singular Favours, particularly from the eminent Society for the Profession and Practise of the Civil-Law, which ought always gratefully to be acknowledged;) I was myself a Witness of her constant and never-failing Attendance upon the publick Service of God, and the Administration of the Sacrament, with the most exemplary Zeal and Devotion: And, in all the Opportunities I had of observing it, her private Conversation appear'd perfectly agreeable to her religious Behaviour in publick. Which, in a Person in the Strength and Vigour of her Age, very little exceeding thirty Years at the Time of her Death, is an *Example* that may be recommended with Justice and Usefulness. But to enlarge too far upon Characters even of such truly pious Persons, is neither giving any real Advantage

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to the Memory of the Dead, nor of so much Benefit to the Living, as the exhorting them upon these Occasions to prepare themselves for Death, which they are all hastening to, by setting before their Eyes continually the most perfect Example of Christ, and the Precepts of the Gospel; in following of which, all good and holy Men and Women who have gone before us, have obtain'd a good Report.

5thly, and Lastly, T H E intermediate State of Separation, though it may be a State of great Happiness, yet is by no Means equal to that Happiness, which good Men shall be possess'd of after the Resurrection: *For we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burden'd; not for that we would be uncloth'd, but cloth'd upon, that Mortality might be swallow'd up of Life.* St Paul, tho' he knew, that when he was absent from the Body, he should be present with the Lord, in a State of Rest and Security and perfect Assurance, in a State of great Happiness and Joy unspeakable; yet tells us, that the Crown of Righteousness was laid up for him, not to be given him by the Righteous Judge before that great Day. And our Saviour himself bids the charitable Person expect his final Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just. And in the Place before-cited, the Souls of the Martyrs themselves, which St John saw in his Vision under the Altar, are represented as in a State of Expectation only; *How long, O Lord, Holy and True, &c. Rev. ix. 7. And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little Season, until their Fellow-Servants also, and their Brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

In a Word, the Souls of the Righteous are doubtless as happy, as they can be in that imperfect State of Separation from their Bodies : But 'tis after the Resurrection only, that their Happiness shall be complete, and that they shall *shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father* : When our Lord shall have *changed this vile Body, that it may be fashion'd like unto his glorious Body* ; according to the *working, whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself* : That is, when *this Body*, which has now in it such manifest Principles of Mortality and Corruption ; which consists now of such brittle and tender Parts, that every the least Violence disturbs and unfits them for their Operations ; when *this Body*, which is now so weak and feeble, so dull, heavy and unactive, that it clogs the Soul, and retards and hinders its spiritual Operations ; when *this Body*, which is now subject to so many Casualties, and has its Continuance depending upon the fit Disposition of so many little and easily disorder'd Parts, that 'tis a greater wonder how we continue to live a Day, than why we die after so few Years Space ; *shall* be perfectly refin'd and purged from all the Seeds of Mortality and Corruption ; *shall* spring up into an incorruptible and immortal Substance, which shall be fitted to endure as long as the Soul to which it is to be united, even to all Eternity ; *shall* become so Strong and Powerful, so Active and Vigorous, as even to be assisting to the most spiritual Motions of the Soul, to become every Way a fit Organ and Instrument of its most exalted Operations ; and *shall* continue in this perfect Health, Strength and Vigour for ever. For

God

Funeral of MARY Lady COOKE. 39

*God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes,
and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow
nor crying, neither shall there be any more Pain ; for
the former Things are passed away.*

To which happy State, that we may all
arrive, God of his infinite Mercy grant,
Ec.

1. The first thing I noticed
when I stepped out of the car
was the smell of the sea.
It was a fresh, salty breeze
that hit me in the face.
I had never smelled anything like it
before.

It was a beautiful day.
The sun was shining brightly,
and the water was a deep blue.
I had never seen anything like it
before.

The beach was wide and sandy.
There were no buildings or cars
in sight. It was a perfect spot
to relax. I had never been to a beach
like this before. The sand was soft
and the water was clear. I had never
seen anything like it before.

I had never seen anything like it before.
The beach was wide and sandy.
There were no buildings or cars
in sight. It was a perfect spot
to relax. I had never been to a beach
like this before. The sand was soft
and the water was clear. I had never
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like this before. The sand was soft
and the water was clear. I had never
seen anything like it before.

S E R M O N III.

Preach'd before the *Honourable House of Commons*, at the Church of St *Margaret, Westminster*, on *Tuesday, November 22, 1709*, being the Day of Thanksgiving for the Signal and Glorious Victory obtained near *Mons*, and for the other great Successes of her Majesty's Arms, this last Year, under the Command of the Duke of *Marlborough*.

P S A L M L. 23.

Whoſo offereth Praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his Converſation aright, will I ſhew the Salvation of God.

TH E R E is no Nation under Heaven, ſince the Times of God's governing the *Jews* by an immediate Theocracy, that has ſeen more and clearer Inſtances of the Interpoſition of Providence on their Behalf, or has had greater Bleſſings and Means of publick Proſperity put into their Hands; than we of this Nation have had. *As the Hills ſtand about Jeruſalem*, ſaid the *Pſalmiſt*, (*Pſalm cxxv. 2.*

even so standeth the Lord round about his People: As the Seas encompass our Land, may we no less justly say, even so does the Protection of Providence surround us on all Sides. We have enjoyed a long and uninterrupted Succession of the Blessings of Heaven from above, and of the Earth beneath; of fruitful Seasons, and a large and plentiful Increase. We have lived under a secure Establishment of all our private Rights and just Liberties, in a wise and well-constituted Government, and in the regular Execution of good and wholesome Laws. We have had the free Exercise of our Religion continued almost to us alone, when so many of those about us have been deprived of that inestimable Liberty. We have had Deliverances little less than miraculous, frequently vouchsafed us; and have seen many visible interpositions of Providence, in causing such Concurrences of Circumstances for our Advantage, as no humane Wisdom could either foresee, direct, or over-rule.

WHEN, after a long Establishment of our Peace and Prosperity, we, like * *Jeshurun*, waxed fat and kicked; when our Prosperity made us wanton, and we forgot God who poured these Benefits upon us; when Corruption of Manners prevailed over the Purity of our Religion, and we grew cool in our Zeal for the Service of God, and for the Honour of his Laws; then did it please God to threaten us with the Rod of arbitrary Power, and with the Fears of Popish Slavery; to awaken us out of our careless neglect of Religion, and to compose our little Differences and unchristian Animosities among ourselves. Yet did he threaten us only with these Judgments, and show us the Terror of them as it were at a distance

* Deut. xxxii. 15.

but

but did not suffer them to prevail over us ; removing them from us by an unparalleled Deliverance, almost as soon as they approached, and that we began to feel the Smart of them. And from the Time of that wonderful Deliverance, even unto this Day, has God continued to bless us with *Success Abroad* under victorious Armies, and with *Peace and Plenty at Home*, under pious and religious Princes. A great and always perpetual Series of Successes has attended *our Arms*, through the various Events and Hazards of a long, bloody, and expensive War ; against the deep Counsels, and formidable Strength, of a cunning, potent, and formerly long-successful Enemy. And at the same Time, *we our selves* sit every Man under *his Vine, and under his Fig-tree*, in the secure and peaceable Enjoyment of whatever each one has a Right to possess. We enjoy almost all the Happiness and Blessings of *Peace*, even in the midst of a vigorous and bloody *War* ; while the Sword and Fire consume round about us, and other fruitful Countries are ravaged and destroyed ; while *Thousands fall beside us, and ten Thousands at our Right-hand*, and yet Providence protects us, that it *comes not nigh us* ; while Want and Famine spreads Desolation among our Neighbours, and Pestilence at a Distance threatens still severer Judgments of God. We are not liable to be perpetually spoiled, by the Violence of Arbitrary Power ; and to be daily bereaved of our nearest and most valuable Rights, at the mere Will and Pleasure of a lawless Oppressor : But under the happy Influences of a mild and most auspicious Government, and under the Protection of wise and good Laws, we enjoy as much Liberty as can be desired by Any, who aim not at the Confusions of unlimited Licentiousness.

And

44 *A Thanksgiving Sermon before*

And to complete this Happiness, we are *not only allowed* the free Exercise of the Reformed Religion, (which under some Governments who call themselves *Christian*, is persecuted even unto Death; and which we all remember the Time, when we had great Reason to apprehend we should have been deprived of it;) but the *Profession* of it is moreover encouraged by *Law*, and the *Practice* of it recommended not only by the *Command* but (which is of greater Influence) by the hearty *Example* also, of our pious and most religious Queen; who in every *Work* that she begins in the Service of the House of God, and in the *Law*, and in the *Commandments*, to seek her God, she does it with all her Heart, and prospers, 2 Chron. xxxi. 21.

If these be Things which are the proper Subjects of Praise and Thanksgiving, and call for the heartiest Expressions of our Gratitude to him who redeemeth our Life from Destruction, and crowneth us with Mercy and Loving-kindness; undoubtedly there is no Nation under the Sun, that has more Reason this Day, than we, to say, * *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits that he has done unto me? I will offer to him the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord.* And O! † *that Men would indeed, with their Mouths and from their Hearts, by the Confession of their Lips, and in the Actions of their Lives, therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Children of men! § That they would exalt him also in the Congregation of the People, and praise him in the Seat of the Elders! That there were in all of us such a Heart, that by making suitable returns*
* Psalm cxvi. 12, 17. † Psalm cvii. 8. § verse 32.

of

of Praise and Obedience to God, for his *past* and *present* Benefits; we might shew our selves worthy of the *Continuance* of his Favour, and secure for the future the same Blessings, to our selves and our Posterity! Could we but prevail with ourselves. not to abuse that Plenty wherewith God has blessed us, by Intemperance and Debauchery: Could we in the midst of that Peace, which we enjoy even while War surrounds us, forbear unreasonable Contentions, and lay aside all our Unchristian Heats and Animosities among ourselves: Could we but use that Liberty we most justly value and boast of, so as not to abuse it to Licentiousness and Wantonness: Could we but in any Measure persuade our selves to *practice* the Religion, we are so zealous to *profess*, and banish from a *Christian* and a *reformed* Nation, Infidelity, Profaneness, and Immorality: In a Word, could we but find in our Hearts to *glorifie* God worthily for his great Mercies, and offer him *Praises* suitable to the wonderful Works which he has done for us; that is, *Praises* accompanied with the Works of Righteousness, so as to *honour* him indeed; this would be truly such an *ordering our Conversation aright*, that we might with good Grounds hope to have the Promise in the Text fulfilled upon ourselves; and, by the Continuance of the same, and the Addition of more Blessings, might see compleated in us *the Salvation of God*. *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifies me; and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God.*

IN these Words we may observe these four Things.

1. THAT God is to be glorified or honoured in all our Actions. *He glorifies me.*

2 THAT

46 *A Thanksgiving Sermon before*

2. **T H A T**, more particularly, upon Occasion of any great *Mercy*, any remarkable *Blessing*, or signal *Interposition* of *Providence* on our Behalf; we ought to show forth his *Glory* by the most publick *Acknowledgments*, by the heartiest *Praises* and *Thanksgivings* to him. *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifies me.*

3. **T H A T** he who will return *Thanks* to God acceptably for past *Mercies*, so as to glorify him indeed; must for the future live suitably to the *Profession* he publickly makes, of his *Sense* of God's *Providence* governing the World, and of his entire *Dependence* upon it. *To him that ordereth his Conversation aright.*

4. **T H A T** to them who thus order their *Conversation aright*, here is a Promise added, of still farther *Blessings*. *I will shew them the Salvation of God.*

I. **T H A T** God is to be glorified or honoured in all our *Actions*. This is implied in those Words, *he glorifies me.* For, the declaring in what Manner, or by what *Actions* God is most glorified; and who the Persons are, that do most truly honour him; is presupposing the Knowledge and Obligation of the Duty itself, that *God is to be glorified or honoured in all our Actions*: That is, *that* we are at all Times, and in all Places, to have a constant Regard to him, and Dependance upon him; to have a perpetual Sense of him upon our Minds, and to make continual *Acknowledgments* to him upon all proper Occasions; *that* he is the Author and Preserver of our Life and Being; *that* on him we rely, for all the good Things we hope for; and by his Permission, by his Grace and Favour, enjoy whatever Good we at present possess; *that* to him all possible Praise and Thanksgiving

is due, for the Prosperity or Success we at any Time meet with, either in our private, or in the publick Affairs; *that* by Him Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice; *that* His Blessing is upon a Nation, whenever pious Princes are established upon the Throne, and their Affairs prosper under a wise Administration, and Success accompanies their Arms *Abroad*, and Peace and Plenty crowns their Endeavours *at Home*. On the contrary, *that* ill Success in any of our Undertakings; the blasting and defeating any of our Designs; the Calamities and Afflictions, of whatever Kind they be, that at any Time fall upon us, are still the Strokes of the same Hand, the Appointment of the same wise Providence, the good Pleasure of the same Supreme Governour and Director of all Things; designed for our Correction and Improvement to withdraw our Affections from Vanity and Trust in the World, and to lead us to Repentance and Amendment. This is, according to the wise Man's Advice, *Acknowledging God in all our Ways*: This is promoting a true Sense of Religion and Piety in the World: This is *honouring and glorifying God*. For, *the Glory of God*, is not any Thing accruing to *God himself*; 'tis not any Addition to *his* Greatness or Happiness, or any Accession to the Perfections of *his* Nature. But, as the true Glory of a *Prince*, is the *Obedience* and the *Prosperity* of his *Subjects*; so the true Notion of the *Glory of God*, is nothing else but the advancing and establishing his *Kingdom* among *Men*. And the *Kingdom of God*, saith St Paul, is *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*. 'Tis something *within* our selves, as our Saviour affirms, St Luke xvii, 21. 'Tis the Conformity of the Creature to
the

the Nature and Life of God, to the Law and Happiness of Heaven, by the Obedience of the Gospel, and by the Reconciliation of their Nature to the eternal and unchangeable Law of Righteousness and Holiness. Promoting the *Glory of God* therefore, is nothing else but advancing the Interest of true Religion, and promoting the Practice of Virtue in the World. For, as Irreligion and Neglect of God, Profaneness or any vicious Practice in those who pretend to believe; do (as is said in the Case of *David*) * *give great Occasion to the Enemies of God to blaspheme*; and they who make their boast in the Law, as St Paul expresses it, do, † *by transgressing the Law, dishonour God*; and the Name of God is through them blasphemed among Unbelievers: So, on the contrary, they who, by unfeigned Piety and Regard to God in the whole Course of their Lives, make § *their Light to shine before Men*; do, by letting others see their good Works, cause Men to glorify their Father which is in Heaven: That is, they bring other Men over to a true Sense of Religion, and persuade them to have a just Value and Esteem for it. This is the true Notion of the *Glory of God*: This is *doing all Things* for his Honour and Glory. And in this Sense 'tis manifest it is our indispensable Duty, to honour and glorify God in all our Actions; by keeping up in our own Minds a constant Sense of him, of his Power and Greatness, of his Wisdom and Providence in governing the World, and disposing of all Events; and, as much as in us lies, exciting the same Sense of him, and Dependence upon him, in the Minds of others likewise.

* 2 Sam. xii. 14. † Rom. ii. 23. § Matt. v. 16.

2. As God is in some Measure to be honoured or glorified by *all our Actions* in general; so *more particularly*, upon Occasion of any great *Mercy or Deliverance*, upon Occasion of any remarkable *Blessing or signal Interposition of Providence on our Behalf*, we ought to show forth *his Glory* by the most *publick Acknowledgments*, by the highest Expressions of our *Gratitude*, by the heartiest *Praises and Thanksgivings* to him. *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifies me*; Or, as it is in the former Translation, *Whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise, he honoureth me*. 'Tis all the Return, that weak and dependent Creatures are capable of making, to the supreme Lord and Governour of all Things; and therefore he is graciously pleased to accept it, as a sufficient *Reward for all the Benefits that he has done unto us*. Our *Goodness extendeth not to him*, Psalm xvi. 2. *neither can Man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself*, Job xxii. 12. But tho' we cannot make him any Return for his Benefits, yet *thankful* to him for them we *can* be; and most inexcusable are we, if we neglect to be so. All that we are able to do, is to make humble acknowledgments of the Mercies we receive from him; and therefore we ought to do it in the gratefullest, and in the most publick and hearty manner we can. Adversity and Afflictions, such Corrections and Chastisements as his fatherly Hand thinks fit at any Time to lay upon us, it becomes us to bear with patient Submission, and silent Resignation to his Will; as being just Reproofs for our Sins, and Calls to Reformation and Repentance: But Blessings and Instances of Mercy, especially publick and national Blessings, call for publick Acknowledgments in such Expressions of Praise and Gratitude, as may

declare to the World our being duly sensible from what Hand they come. Upon account of the Works of *Creation*, all, even inanimate Creatures, are in Scripture called upon to praise the Lord; that is, to contribute Matter, and afford perpetual Occasion by the Meditation of them, to all rational Creatures to sing his Praises; * *Praise him* (that is, afford continual subject-matter for his Praises,) *O ye Sun and Moon; praise him all ye Stars of Light, &c.* The Works of *Providence*, are no less great and conspicuous, than those of *Creation*; and for these Works, Men, who are chiefly and most immediately concern'd in them, and who alone are able to discern and judge of them, are in Scripture required perpetually to praise him: To praise him *perpetually*; because the Number and Variety of them is so great, that no Tongue can worthily or sufficiently extol them: † *Who can express the noble Acts of the Lord, or show forth all his Praise?*

'Tis the least that any reasonable Person can do, in return for great Benefits; to make a thankful Acknowledgment of them, to *him* from whom he receiv'd them. And yet because 'tis *all*, (as I before observ'd) that weak and dependent Creatures *can* pay to *him* who is absolute Lord of all Things; therefore, when it proceeds from a sincere Mind and hearty Affection, 'tis accepted by him as the most valuable Sacrifice. verse 9. of this 50th Psalm; *I will take no Bullock, saith God, out of thy House, nor He-goats out of thy Fold; for all the Beasts of the Forest are mine, and so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills: Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? No: But offer unto God Thanksgiving, and*

* Psalm cxlviii. 3.

† Psalm cvi. 2.

pay thy Vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the Day of Trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me. Again, Psalm cxvi. 12, 17. What shall I render unto the Lord, for all the Benefits that he has done unto me? I will offer to him the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord. And Psalm lxix. 30, 31. I will praise the Name of God with a Song, and will magnify him with Thanksgiving: This also shall please the Lord, better than a Bullock that has Horns and Hoofs. The same Notion is very elegantly expressed by the Prophet Hosea, ch. xiv. ver. 2. We will render the Calves of our Lips; i. e. We will return to God such hearty Thanks for his Mercies, as shall be more acceptable to him than the Sacrifices of Calves or Sheep. The Phrase is translated by the LXX, the Fruit of our Lips: And so St Paul cites it, Heb. xiii. 15. Let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually; that is, the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name.

THE Obligation to this Duty, is so evident and so reasonable, that it is sometimes in Scripture put for the whole of Religion; and the Neglect of it, marked as a total Defection from God. Thus St Paul, Rom. i. 21. describing the inexcusable Corruption of the Heathen World, puts it principally upon this; *because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were Thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned. They cou'd not but know God, by his Works; yet they were not Thankful, nor glorified him according to that Knowledge; therefore, says the Apostle, they are without Excuse* The plainer and more obvious the Duty is, and the more fully God has declared his Acceptance of it, to Us who en-

joy the Advantage of Revelation; the more unworthy still, and the more inexcusable, is *Unthankfulness* and Neglect of him. 'Tis the perpetual Complaint of the Prophets in the Old Testament, that after all the great Things that God had done for the Nation of the *Jews*, their Ingratitude was most provoking to him; *He made them ride on the high Places of the Earth, that they might eat the Increase of the Fields, and suck Honey out of the Rock, and Oyl out of the flinty Rock:—But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked;—he soon forsook the God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation,* Deut. xxxii. 13. And 'tis recorded of a great and good King; one, concerning whom the Scripture testifies, that in other Things he * *did that which was right in the Sight of the Lord*, so that before him there was none equal to him, neither after him arose there any like him; 'tis noted of *Him*, even of good King *Hezekiah*, as a very great Blemish, as a Thing very unnatural and unbecoming him, and at which God was highly displeased; that after the Lord had destroy'd his Enemies, by sending an Angel which cut off all the mighty Men of Valour, and the Leaders and Captains in the Camp of the King of *Assyria*; and after he had miraculously caused him to recover from a mortal Disease; yet he rendred not again according to the Benefit done unto him; for his Heart was lifted up; therefore there was Wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem, 2 Chron. xxxii. 21, 25.

THE many wonderful Victories, that God has granted Us, over the Armies of a Prince more Potent than the King of *Assyria*; and who has often thought to swallow us up more easily, than *Sennacherib* did

* 2 Kings xviii. 3, 5.

to destroy *Jerusalem*, and over-run the Land of *Judæa*; the many wonderful Victories, I say, which God has given *Us*, and particularly the great Successes wherewith he has blessed us this present Year, and for which we are now met together to return him Thanks; are such as will set as great or a greater Mark of Ingratitude upon *Us*, if our real Thankfulness be not answerable to our outward Expressions of Joy, and our consequent Behaviour suitable to both.

THE Fatigue and Length of the foregoing Campaign, which had been drawn out into the very midst of Winter; the extreme Rigour of the ensuing Season, and the Backwardness of the Spring which occasioned such a Scarcity of Forage, that it was impossible to open the Campaign before the Summer was far spent; and at the same Time the Artifices made use of by our Enemies to amuse us with false Appearances and deceitful Insinuations of their Desire of Peace, and to try if from thence Means might be found to create any Divisions or Jealousies among the Allies; gave some Hopes to *France*, that they should have been able to avoid the Blow wherewith they were threatened; and that, by gaining Time, they might, at least for this Summer, have escaped the Dangers to which by their former Losses they seemed to be exposed. But the Providence of God, directing our Counsels, the Unanimity and Steadiness of the Allies, the Prudence and Vigilance of our Generals, and the Indefatigableness of our Troops, entirely disappointed the Enemies Expectation: And the Campaign began with the taking of one of the strongest Fortresses in *Europe*; in the Fortifying of which, no Pains, no Cost had been spared, for a Trial how far it was possible to increase Strength by the Perfection

of Art. To prevent further Losses of this Kind, the Enemy resolv'd to hazard a Battle; yet in such Circumstances, that, according to the usual Measure and Judgment of Events in War, they thought themselves to run no *bazard*. But in the Issue it appear'd that thro' the Courage and Conduct of our Generals, whose Greatness as no History can parallel, so no Character can do Justice to, and thro' the Bravery and Intrepidity of our Troops, which as no Difficulties can withstand, so no Words can sufficiently express; those mighty Intrenchments, those double and treble Defences, wherein the Enemies thought themselves so secure, serv'd only to increase the Glory of the Arms of the Allies, and to convince the Enemy how little Hopes remained of their ever gaining any Advantage over those Troops upon *equal* Ground, against whom they could not defend themselves upon the *most unequal*. Nevertheless, according to their usual *Vanity*, they boasted of a Victory; unless we will rather ascribe it to their beginning to put on some Degree of *Modesty*, when they declare they esteem it the noblest Atchievement and the greatest height of their Glory, to have been able to make a *Retreat* after being beaten, with *less Loss than usual*. But in a Matter of this Nature, 'tis not of so much Importance what *Representations*, what *artful Descriptions* may be made of the Action itself: 'Tis the *Effect*, the *Consequences* of great Actions, that afford the truest Judgment of the Greatness of the Success. And here it was sufficiently evident *on which Side*, and to *what Degree* Victory declar'd itself; when the immediate Consequence of the Battle, was the laying Siege to another strong Town, and the taking it in a short Time without the Enemies being

in

in a Condition so much as to *offer at* any Attempt of coming to its Relief.

For these great and continu'd Successes, where-with the Providence of God has vouchsafed to bless us, let us make thankful Acknowledgment to his divine Majesty, in the Words of *David*, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. *Thine, O Lord, is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty; for all that is in the Heaven, and in the Earth, is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. Both Riches and Honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine Hand is Power and Might, and in thine Hand it is to make Great, and to give Strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious Name.*

To neglect acknowledging the Hand of Providence in these great Events, would be not only base Ingratitude and Unworthiness, but also the greatest and most inexcusable Inconsiderateness. For since the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong; since the wisest Counsels do not always prosper, nor the best laid Designs constantly take Effect; but the Providence of God over-rules all Events, by secret and undiscern'd Springs; 'tis to his Blessing wholly, we must thankfully acknowledge, that even the best concerted Measures owe their Success. 'Tis by his Blessing, that Unanimity is preserv'd among the Allies, that Generals are inspir'd with Wisdom, and Troops with Undauntedness and Bravery; And 'tis by the Continuance of the same Blessing, that that Unanimity, Conduct and Courage, are attended with Success. Unanimity has been, with the greatest Advantage, on our Enemies Side: Their Soldiers some-
times

times have not been void of *Bravery*, nor their *Generals of Skill*: Yet have they been defeated in Battle after Battle, till the Strength of the potentest Monarch upon Earth has been almost entirely broken, and his Power reduc'd to an Extremity of Distress.
 * *The King shall mourn, and the Prince shall be clothed with Desolation, and the Hands of the People of the Land shall be troubled; I will do unto them after their Way, and according to their Deserts will I judge them:*
 † *That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the Hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it: That*
 § *they may know that this is thy Hand, and that thou, Lord, has done it.*

NOR ought it to be omitted, that, next under God who is the first Author of all Victory, all due Honour and Acknowledgment is to be paid to the *Instruments*, by which our Successes have been accomplished; the Wisdom and Conduct of the Generals, and the Bravery of those who executed their Commands. For, though Providence has indeed, in the whole Course of this War, very signally interpos'd in our Behalf; yet not by immediate Miracle, as in the Days of *Jehosaphat* King of *Judah*, when it was said to them by the Prophet, 2 Chron. xx. 17. *Ye shall not need to fight in this Battle, set you selves, stand ye still, and see the Salvation of the Lord.* But the Blessings of Providence are convey'd to *Us*, thro' the Wisdom and Diligence of second Causes. For as, on the one Hand without the Blessing of Providence, the greatest Wisdom of Man is Folly, and his Strength Weakness; and || *a Horse is counted but a*
 * Ezek. vii. 27. † Isa xli. 20. § Psalm cix. 27.
 || Psalm xxxiii. 17.

vain Thing to save a Man, neither shall it deliver any Man by its great Strength: So neither on the other Hand have we now any Reason to expect, that Providence, will work for us direct Miracles, but only bleis the Endeavours of subordinate Causes. Wherefore all due Acknowledgments ought to be made to the Instruments, by whose Means we are deliver'd from our Enemies, and by whose Hands is work'd for us the Salvation of God. And 'tis noted in Scripture as a great Reproach upon the Children of Israel, that they were sometimes ungrateful to the Persons by whom God had work'd their Deliverance, and that they remember'd 'em not according to all the Goodness that they had shew'd unto Israel, Judges viii. 35.

3. H *is* that will *return Thanks* to God acceptably for past Mercies, so as to *glorify him indeed*; must for the future *live suitably* to that Profession he pretends to make, of his Sense of God's Providence in governing the World, and of his entire Dependence upon it. *To him, that ordereth his Conversation aright.* The Expressions of our present Joy, must be such as become the Gospel of Christ; and the following Part of our Lives must show, that our Praises proceed not out of feigned Lips. Publick Praises and Thanksgivings are acceptable to God, as Part of our Religious Worship and Adoration of him; but 'tis then only so, when the Declarations of our Mouths are the real Significations of the Intentions of our Hearts, and our Designs are not to abuse those Mercies which we thank him for. We must so return our Thanks for past Mercies, as that, by their having a due Influence upon us, we may show our selves worthy of the Continuance of them, and of God's bestowing

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bestowing still more upon us ; and then our Praise will be indeed an acceptable Sacrifice. *Rejoice in the Lord, ye RIGHTEOUS, saith the Psalmist ; for it becometh well the Just to be thankful, Psalm xxxi. 1. But of the * Wicked it may truly be affirm'd, that as their Prayer, so their Praise also is an Abomination to the Lord.*

4. To them who thus order *their Conversation aright*, here is a Promise added of yet farther Blessings : *I will shew them the Salvation of God.* They who worthily express their Thanks for *past Mercies*, not by debauch'd and unseemly Mirth, but by truly honouring and fearing God, may reasonably hope for more Occasions of praising him. If ye be *Willing and Obedient*, ye shall † *eat the Fat of the Land* ; and the Lord will *delight to do you good*. Our Praises and Thanksgivings for *past Victories*, if accompany'd with sincere Obedience, will be, like the lifting up of || *Moses's Hands upon the Mount*, a certain Evidence of future Success. God has already blest the Endeavours of our pious Queen with so great Prosperity, that we may justly say with the Psalmist, *Psalm xx. 6. Now know I that the Lord helpeth his Anointed, and will bear him from his holy Heaven, even with the wholesome Strength of his right Hand. Some put their Trust in Chariots, and some in Horses, but we will remember the Name of our Lord our God: They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.* Nay ; we have reasonable Grounds to apply to our Enemies the Prophet Nabum's Lamentation over the King of *Assyria, ch. iii. ver. 19. There is no healing of thy Bruise, thy Wound is* * *Prov. xxiii. 9. † Isaiah i. 19. || Exod. xvii. 11.*

grievous

*grievous; all that bear the Bruit of thee, shall clap their Hands over thee; for upon whom has not thy Wickedness pass'd continually? Or that of the Prophet Isaiah, ch. xiv. ver. 16. They that see thee, shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the Man that made the Earth to tremble? That did shake Kingdoms? That made the World as a Wilderness, and destroy'd the Cities thereof? That open'd not the House of his Prisoners? The sudden breaking of so great a Power, shows how easily Providence, if we prove ungrateful to him, can even yet disappoint our most probable Hopes, and, after all our Successes bring us to Confusion. But the Example of Piety set us from the Throne, will, we hope, so effectually discourage all Immorality and Profaneness, and by spreading its Influence afar, excite in the Nation such a Spirit of Virtue and true Religion, that God may be intreated of us to continue to bless us with Success, 'till the present bloody and expensive War terminates in such a Peace, as may establish upon a lasting Foot the Liberties of Europe. * The humble shall see this, and be glad: And their Heart shall live, that seek God. † For God will save Sion, and build the Cities of Judah, that Men may dwell there, and have it in Possession: The Posterity also of his Servants shall inherit it; and they that love his Name, shall dwell therein.*

I ADD only a Word of Exhortation, and so conclude.

THE Ground of our rejoicing, and returning Thanks to God for the Successes of the present War, is, that those Successes tend to secure to us the Ends, for which the War was at first undertaken, *viz.* the

* Psalm xxxiv. 2. † Psalm lxix. 35.

procuring

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procuring a safe and lasting Peace, the Support and Establishment of the present Constitution of our Government, the maintaining the Rights and Liberties of our selves and all Europe, and the Preservation of the Protestant Religion among us.

First, THEREFORE, if we will show ourselves truly thankful for the Successes of the *War*, let us endeavour to maintain such Unanimity among ourselves, as may convince our Enemies they can have no Hopes of putting an End to the *War*, but by consenting to such a *Peace*, as may be *safe and lasting*. And let us so lay aside all unreasonable Divisions and private Animosities, that whensoever it shall please God to put a successful End to the *War* abroad, we may enjoy the blessed Effects of *Peace and Charity, of mutual Confidence and Agreement at home.*

Secondly, LET us heartily endeavour to promote the Interest of *that Government*, the Support and Establishment whereof is one principal Effect of the Successes for which we publicly return Thanks to God. Let us contribute our utmost, each in our proper Stations, to support a Government so happily establish'd; and to make the executive Part of it as easy, and as little burdensome as possible, in the Hands wherein it is lodg'd. * *To seek the Peace of the City or Country wherein we dwell, and in the Peace thereof to expect Peace, is Men's Duty and Interest even under bad Governments: How much more, under the best and most wisely constituted Government in the World, under the easiest and gentlest Administration, under a Government wherein nothing else is design'd but the preserving the publick Welfare*

* .crem. xxix 7.

and

and Happiness, the Security and Establishment of the Protestant Religion, the maintaining the Rights and Liberties both of Nations and of private Persons against Tyranny and Oppression: How much more, I say, in this Case, must all such be utterly inexcusable, who, under any Pretences whatever, foment Divisions and Animosities, Jealousies and groundless Suspicions, to weaken the Hands of the Government, and prevent the perfecting and securing upon a lasting Foot the fore-mention'd great and excellent Ends! We have been rescu'd by wonderful Deliverances, from the Rod of Arbitrary Power, from the Follies of Enthusiasm, and from the Superstitions of Popery: *Should we again grow weary of our own Happiness, and despise the Liberty, wherewith God has bless'd us; should we again desire to join in Affinity with the People of these Abominations; would it not be just with God to suffer them still to become, Thorns in our Sides, and their Gods to be a Snare unto us, and that he should be angry with us till he had consumed us?* Ezra ix. 12.

Thirdly, LET us take great Heed, lest by running into lawless and ungovernable Licentiousness, we abuse and destroy those Rights and Liberties, which have long been so earnestly and so justly contended for; and which the Successes we are now returning Thanks for, are the Means of securing to us upon a solid Foundation. God has bless'd us with great and glorious Success against our Foreign Enemies; which we hope he will continue to us, till the Liberties of Europe be establish'd by a firm and lasting Peace. Let us not after That, become Enemies to Ourselves, by a Licentiousness impatient of the most necessary Restraints; lest by our own Unthankfulness

and *Intestine* Confusions, we deprive ourselves of the Benefit of a Blessing purchas'd with so much Blood and Treasure; and provoke God to suffer us to destroy ourselves by losing our *Liberty* wholly, while we affect more of it than is just and reasonable, or consistent with good Order and Government and the publick Safety. For as, on the one Hand, the Abuse of Arbitrary Power in *Governors*, has generally been the Occasion of putting People upon recovering the Liberties they had lost; so on the other Hand, Licentiousness or Abuse of Liberty in the *People*, tends always to such Confusions, as terminate usually in Arbitrary Power again.

Fourthly, AND above all, let us take Care to *practise* the Religion we *profess*, and for the Preservation whereof we are so highly concern'd. One of the principal Benefits of all the glorious Successes God has blest'd us with, is the securing the Reform'd Religion amongst us, against the Attempts of Popish Superstition. But what will it profit us, to bear the Name and Profession of a *Reform'd Religion*, if in our Practice and in Reality we have *no Religion at all*? Of what Use will it be to us, to be secur'd from the Vanities and Superstitions of Popery; if on the contrary we run into Atheism, Irreligion and Profaneness?

CHRISTIANITY itself, our Saviour assures us, is of no Advantage to those who do not obey the *Will of his Father which is in Heaven*; but their Portion will be among *Unbelievers*. In like Manner neither can any particular *Reformation of Religion* from the grossest Corruptions that have crept into it, be of any Benefit to those, whose

the Honourable House of Commons. 63
whose Manners are not reform'd together with their
Profession.

G O D, * who commandeth the Light to shine
out of Darkneſs, grant that the Light of the glorious
Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, may ſo
ſhine in our Hearts, as that we may bring forth
Fruit worthy of that Light of the Knowledge of the
Glory of God, in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt.

2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

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SERMON

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S E R M O N I V.

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N,

At St JAMES's Chapel, on *Wednesday*
the 8th of *March*, 1709-10. being
the Anniversary of Her Majesty's hap-
py Accession to the Throne.

Publiſh'd by Her M A J E S T Y's Special Command.

2 C H R O N. XXXI. 21.

*And in every Work that he began in the
Service of the House of God, and in the
Law, and in the Commandments to seek
his God, he did it with all his Heart, and
prospered.*

TH E R E is so necessary a Connexion be-
tween the Happiness of Governors, and that
of the People committed to their Charge;
that as there lies an indispensable Obligation upon
Princes and all that are in Authority, to govern in
the Ways of Piety and Righteousness, in order to
the Welfare and Prosperity of the Publick, as well
as upon account of their own private Duty to God;

so the People have always great Reason to be very thankful to God, when under the Administration of pious and religious Princes, they enjoy both in the natural Course of Things, the unspeakable Advantages of Peace and good Government, and have moreover a particular Title to the extraordinary Blessings of Providence, and to all the Promises God has made in Scripture to the Righteous, of national Prosperity.

G O D, who is perfect Goodness, and who communicates to all his Creatures such Proportions of Happiness, as is suitable to the original or improved Capacities of their Natures; has so framed and constituted the Nature of Man in this present State, that as *every particular Person*, with regard to the Temper of his own Mind, is in great Measure either Happy or Miserable within himself, in Proportion as his Passions are more or less subject to the Direction and Government of right Reason; so *Numbers of Men in Societies* likewise, do proportionably either promote or destroy each other's Happiness, as their Dealings one with another are either just and righteous, equitable and charitable, honourable and publick-spirited; or, on the contrary, base and malicious, deceitful and unrighteous, violent and oppressive. The Happiness which Mankind would enjoy even here upon Earth, if all Men's Passions were kept subject to Reason, and every private Interest made subservient to the publick; is greater than can be expressed in Words, or that can easily be conceived in the Imagination. And to preserve that Happiness constant and perpetual, among Persons of such a Disposition; there would be wanting little other *Government*, but that of Right Reason; and few other *Laws*, than only the Dictates of Conscience, which are the Law of the most High.

But

But this being the State, not of *Earth*, but of *Heaven*; not of the *present* World, but of the *new Heaven* and *new Earth*, wherein is to dwell universal Righteousness; that which in the next place is most desirable, and which is the highest Degree of Happiness that can in Fact be attained to by Mankind here upon Earth, is, that the Practise of Righteousness and true Virtue may be established and encouraged by *Human Laws*; that the *Execution* of those Laws be intrusted in just and wise Hands; and that Governors, both Supreme and Subordinate, at the same Time that they impartially administer Justice to others, be themselves *Examples* of that Virtue and Goodness, which the Design of all good Laws is to promote the Practise of. That so, those who *fear not God*, nor *love Righteousness*, may yet either thro' *Shame*, or the *Fear of Men*, be in some Measure restrained within the Bounds of their Duty; and, if they will not, out of a Sense of Religion, endeavour to do *Good* in the World; yet at least, by the Coercion of wise Laws, they may be prevented from being able to do much *Mischief* in it.

As the *greatest Calamity* that can befall Mankind, is to be left in a State of *absolute Anarchy and Confusion*, to devour each other like wild Beasts; in a State, wherein Force gives Right to all Manner of Oppression, and Fraud and Violence are practised with all Impunity and without Restraint: And the *next* to this extreme Calamity, is *bad Government*; wherein either Laws promote the Mischiefs they ought to prevent; or Governors, against Law, encourage those very Practices which 'tis the whole Intention of their Office to restrain; and Princes become Terrors to their Neighbours, and Destroyers of their own Subjects; and the

the Oppressed cry, and no Man delivers them; and Violence sits in the Seat of Judgment, and Extortion and Rapine are establish'd as it were by Law: As such *bad Government*, I say, is the next great Calamity to having *no Government at all*: So, on the contrary, *next* to that Angelical State, that *State of Paradise*, wherein there would be little need of any other Laws or Authority than the fear of God; the *next great Blessing* Mankind is capable of, is *good Government*: Government, which truly answers the Design of its Establishment; which, in real Effects, represents the Divine Authority; which, by the whole Exercise of its Power, promotes the Honour of God in the World, and the publick Welfare and Happiness of Mankind.

ACCORDINGLY the principal Instruments which God generally makes use of, either in conveying his greatest temporal Blessings to Mankind, or in inflicting his severest Punishments on any Nation or People, are *good or bad Princes*.

'TIS remarkable in the History of the Jewish Nation, that when *they rejected the Lord, that he should not reign over them*, 1 Sam. viii. 7. The Threatning wherewith the Prophet was commanded to endeavour to deter them from their disobedient Purpose was this, *ver. 9. Protest solemnly unto them, and show them the Manner of the King that shall reign over them.——He will take your Sons, and appoint them for himself, for his Chariots, and to be his Horsemen; and some shall run before his Chariots: And he——will set them to ear his Ground, and to reap his Harvest, and to make his Instruments of War, and Instruments of his Chariots: And he will take your Fields and your Vineyards and Oliveyards, even the best of them,*

them, and give them to his Servants.——And ye shall cry out in that Day, and the Lord will not bear you. There have been some so unreasonable, as to interpret this Passage, not as a threatening of Punishment express'd in the Character of a bad Government, but as a Delegation of that Power which God intended all Governors should have a Right to exercise. But the whole Scope and Connexion of the Words, evidently shews the contrary. And the Histories of the Eastern Nations of the World, who have long lived under the Exercise of such absolute Arbitrary Dominion, show how inexpressibly great a Calamity such Governments are to Mankind. And the Experience even of a neighbouring Nation alone, which from one of the potentest and most flourishing Kingdoms upon Earth, has been reduced even to the extreme degree of Misery; is a sufficient Evidence of this Truth. Most reasonably therefore, and as a most proper Argument to deter the *Jews* from continuing in their wanton Disposition of rebelling against God's Government, might the Prophet threaten them with being made subject to such a Dominion.

ON the contrary, in those Passages of Scripture, wherein are promised the greatest Temporal Blessings that God ever bestows on any Nation or People, such Promises are frequently and most emphatically express'd under Descriptions of mild and gentle Governments; of Governments wherein Justice is establish'd by wise Laws, or administer'd by the Will of Righteous Princes. In the *lxxiid Psalm*, the Description of a Prince, the Greatness and Prosperity of whose Government was to be a Type of the Blessedness of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; is this, *He shall judge the People*

People according unto Right, and defend the Poor:— He shall keep the simple Folk by their Right, defend the Children of the Poor, and punish the wrong Doer: — He shall come down like the Rain in o a Fleece of Wool, even as the Drops that water the Earth: In his Time shall the Righteous flourish, yea, and abundance of Peace so long as the Moon endureth: — He shall deliver the Poor when he crieth, the Needy also, and him that hath no Helper: He shall be favourable to the Simple and Needy, and shall preserve the Souls of the Poor. And in the lxth Chapter of Isaiab, the final Restoration of Jerusalem, which perhaps is no other than a Description of the Happiness of the Heavenly State itself; because a nobler and loftier Figure could not be borrow'd from any Thing to be found on Earth, is express'd by this Similitude: ver. 17. I will make thy Officers Peace, and thine Exactors Righteousness: Violence shall no more be heard in the Land, Wasting nor Destruction within thy Borders; but thou shalt call thy Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praise: — Thy People also shall be all Righteous.

SOME Proportions of this Blessedness, both by the natural Consequence of Things and by the positive Direction and Interposition of Providence, do, even in this present mixt and uncertain State of Things, always attend any Nation; when Unrighteousness and Debauchery are in any Measure discourag'd by the good Disposition of the People, or by the pious Endeavours of a Wise and Religious Governor. We of this Nation have (thanks be to God) experienc'd good and very great Effects of this Kind: And, was it not for our Unthankfulness and Unworthy Returns for God's Blessings, we might have Reason still to expect more. The Jewish Nation, whose History

was

was written for our Example, was always blessed with singular Prosperity, when under any pious Prince they lived in remarkable Obedience to the Law of God; and never in a more conspicuous Manner, than in the Days of that excellent Person, of whom it is recorded in the Words of the Text, that *in every Work that he began in the Service of the House of God; and in the Law, and in the Commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his Heart, and Prospered.*

THE Words are part of the Character of that pious Prince *Hezekiah* King of *Judah*, of whom the Scripture tells us, that *he did that which was right in the Sight of the Lord, according to all that David his Father had done*; and that he kept such a Passover; as had not been kept before, from the Days of David unto that Day; and that he wrought that which was good and right and truth, before the Lord his God; and in every Work that he began in the Service of the House of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his Heart: And the Text adds, that he *Prospered*; and that God blessed him according to his singular Piety. For when *Sennacherib* King of *Assyria* came up against him and against *Jerusalem* with a mighty Host to take it, the Lord sent an Angel, (2 Chr. xxxii. 21.) which cut off all the mighty Men of Valour, and the Leaders and Captains in the Camp of the King of *Assyria*, so that he returned with Shame of Face to his own Land; And the Lord saved *Hezekiah* and guided him on every Side, and he was magnified in the Sight of all Nations from thenceforth, ver 23. We cannot in this profane and licentious Age, apply to our selves the Zeal wherewith the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* assisted their pious King in his earnest Endeavours to restore among them

them the Religion and Piety of their Ancestors: Neither, if we could, had we any Warrant to expect such *miraculous* Interpositions of the immediate Hand of God on our Behalf, as his peculiar People then experienc'd. But the Endeavours of that pious Princess whom God has now set over us, to discourage all Immorality, Debauchery and Profaneness, and to promote the Practice of true Religion and Piety in this Nation; are not inferior to the good Dispositions of any of the pious Kings of *Judab*: Nor are the Successes wherewith the Providence of God has bless'd us in this Auspicious Reign, against the common Enemies of our Religion and Liberties; much less remarkable, than the Deliverances work'd formerly by direct Miracle for the Children of *Israel*.

IN the Words we may observe,

I. THAT the first and principal Care of good Princes, is to promote the Interest of true *Religion and Virtue among the People* committed to their Charge. *In every Work that be began in the Service of the House of God, and in the Law and in the Commandments, to seek his God; be did it with all his Heart.* Princes are the Vicegerents of God upon Earth; intrusted with Power from him for the Government of Men in Societies, and for the maintenance of Peace and Justice and good Order in the World. This Power is vested in different Hands, and limited with different Regulations, and exercised in different Manners, according to the Laws and Customs of different Nations: But the Power it self is of Divine Original and Appointment, being the Ordinance and Constitution of God; for which Reason Governors, both Supreme and Subordinate, are stiled in Scripture, *Gods*, and the immediate Ministers

of

of God. Having therefore this Power by Divine Appointment, and representing God in the Exercise of it; 'tis manifest their first and chiefest Care ought to be, to employ it in advancing *his* Honour and Glory, from whom they received it. Power without Goodness, and Wisdom not employed in the promoting of Righteousness is the justest Object of Men's Fear and Aversion: But when those who are the Ministers of God in the Exercise of Power, imitate him also in that more lovely Perfection of Goodness; and make it their principal Business to encourage that universal Virtue, the Establishment of which in the World, is in the most acceptable Manner fulfilling the Will of God, and promoting his Honour and Glory; then do they most eminently verify that Character the Scripture gives of them, *I have said ye are Gods, and ye are all the Children of the Most High.* The Instructions upon this Head, given by David in his dying Words, are very remarkable, *2 Sam. xxiii.*

1. *These be the last Words of David: David the Son of Jesse said, and the Man who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue; the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God. He must himself rule in the Fear of God; and he must make it his chief and principal Care, to cause Others to fear him likewise.* Accordingly we find the principal Part of the Character of all the good Kings of Judah, whose History is related in Scripture; taken from their Zeal to promote the Service and Worship of God, and the Establishment of true Religion in their Kingdom. Many of the Methods

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they used, agreeable to the then present State and Circumstances of Things, and to the extraordinary Commissions they had; are by no Means indeed to be imitated under the Gospel-State, or drawn into Example by the Practice of Christian Princes, who have no such special and immediate Warrants from God: But in general 'tis still their Duty, by all wise and christian Methods, by all Methods suitable to the Nature and Design of the Gospel, to employ the Power and Authority God has given them, in promoting the Interest of the true Religion, in encouraging Virtue and discouraging Vice. It is still true, that a wise King scattereth the Wicked, and bringeth the Wheel over them, Prov. xx. 26. 'Tis still true, that Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil; that the Magistrate, supreme or subordinate, beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil. Rom. xiii. 4. that he is, sent of God for the Punishment of evil doers, and for the Praise of them that do well, 1 Pet. ii. 14.

THE only Caution here necessary to be us'd, is, that true Religion, in the promoting whereof the principal Care of good Princes is to be employed, be always understood to consist; not in Matters of Notion, Speculation, and Dispute; not in Questions of Controversy, and uncertain Opinions; not in Matters of mere Humane and Temporary Authority; but in Obedience to the plain Precepts of the Gospel of Christ; in the great and Fundamental Duties of Piety towards God, Righteousness towards Men, and Temperance in the Government of ourselves; on the Practice of which, depends the Happiness of this Life, and of that which is to come: And that the Things to be principally

principally discouraged by them, are Profaneness and Impiety, Unrighteousness and Iniquity, Debauchery and all Immorality.

Now as the *Nature and Derivation* of their Authority itself, so likewise *the End and Design* of all Government, obliges good Princes to make the promoting of Religion and Virtue among the People, their principal and greatest Care. For the ultimate End and Design of all Government, is the Peace and Safety, the Welfare and Prosperity of the Publick, of the Society or Community united under such a Form of Government. Now 'tis manifest that nothing promotes this great End, so much as the Practice of Religion and true Virtue. For Virtue and a true Sense of Religion, obliges every Subject, every Member of the Society, in whom it is found; it obliges him *beforehand*, by a much stronger and securer Tie, to do all the same Things *freely and willingly, heartily and sincerely, in publick and in private*; which the best and wisest Laws can but compel those who want such a Sense of Religion, to do *unwillingly, slightly and superficially, in publick Appearance only, and in the Sight of Men*. Religion therefore and true Virtue, if they prevailed in the World, would obtain the same End *fully and effectually*, which the best and wisest Laws can do but *in Part*: And Laws are made only to supply; in the best Manner they can, the Want of true Religion and Virtue among Men. *The Law is not made for a Righteous Man, but for the Lawless and Disobedient, for the Ungodly and for Sinners, for the Unboly and the Profane.* 2 Tim. i. 9. For the same Reasons therefore, that 'tis very necessary for the Establishment of good Government in the World, that Men should be perpetually under the restraint of

wise and wholesome *Laws*; for the same Reasons 'tis much more desirable, (and ought to be the great Aim and Design, the main and constant Endeavour of those in Power and Authority,) that *Religion and true Virtue* should universally prevail; the want of which only it is, that introduces the necessity of any coercive *Laws or Penalties* at all.

THE Means by which good Princes are to promote the Practice of true Religion in the World, is not (as was before observed,) by putting Difficulties upon such as are weak or erroneous, in Matters of Speculation and Dispute, or in the External of Religion; but by securing the Foundation of Virtue and good Manners, upon which the Happiness of a Nation does most immediately depend; by maintaining the Honour of God, and keeping up a due Sense and Acknowledgment of his Providence, in the Minds of Men; by preserving Faithfulness and Truth, Integrity and Uncorruptness in the transacting and managing of all publick and private Affairs; and by effectually discouraging all Immorality and Debauchery, which enfeeble the Spirits, and destroy the Power and Honour of a Nation.

THIS is principally done by good *Example*, and by countenancing such as are desirous to follow it. For as the Sun diffuses Heat and Vigour, together with its Rays of Light, thro' the spacious Universe; and insensibly promotes in all Things, by its powerful Influence, both Life and Growth, Motion and Action; so the Example of a pious Prince, gives far greater countenance to Religion, than the strictest *Laws*; encourages well-disposed Persons, and gives Life and Spirit to all pious Designs; makes Vice and Immorality ashamed to show its Head; or at least gives

gives a Check to the more open Profaneness, of such as would publickly despise and throw Contempt upon Religion: Whereas, on the contrary, when the supreme Authority of a Nation, when the *Light of the World*, is itself *Darkness*; how great must that *Darkness* be? When the *Head is sick*, and the *whole Heart faint*, what Health and Soundness can the whole Body enjoy?

FURTHER: The next Means, By which good Princes may promote the Interest of Religion, and the Practice of Virtue in the World; next to the Encouragement afforded by their own good Example; is by taking all fit Care, that Men be not corrupted in their first Principles by Ignorance and gross Neglect; by Careleseness and want of due Instruction. 'Tis recorded of *Jehoshaphat* King of *Judah*, as a most remarkable Part of his good Character, *That he sent to his Princes, and appointed Levites and Priests to teach in the Cities of Judah; and they had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the Cities of Judah, and taught the People.* 2 Chr. xvii. 7. And in this particular, as her present Majesty has exceeded the Piety even of the best and most religious Princes among her Predecessors, by considerably augmenting out of her own Revenue the maintenance of those who by divine Appointment are set apart to the Office of teaching and instructing Men in Matters of Religion; so, that charitable Disposition which seems daily to increase and spread in the Nation, of educating and instructing poor Children in the Principles of Religion, and in the Methods of Industry and honest Labour, it may reasonably be hoped will contribute in due Time to the Accomplishment of that Prophecy, that *the Earth*

shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Seas.

2. 'T is observed in the Text, that the *Effect* of Princes making it their chief Care to promote the Interest of true Religion and Virtue; is, *the Prosperity of themselves and their People.* In every Work that he began, in the Service of the House of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandments, to seek his God; he did it with all his Heart, and *Prospered.* In the parallel Place, 2 Kings xviii. 7. The Word *Prospered* is thus more largely expressed; *the Lord was with him, and he Prospered, whithersoever he went forth.* We find in the Histories both of ancient and modern Times, that it has *sometimes indeed* happened otherwise; and that good and pious Princes have for the Sins and Iniquities of their People, or for other secret and wise Reasons of Providence, been very unsuccessful in their Affairs, and fallen under great Calamities. But generally speaking, and in the usual Course of Providence, good and religious Princes have been blessed with Success, and great Prosperity. And of this, there are two obvious Reasons. *First*, The natural Tendency of the Thing itself. When Princes govern in the Fear of God, according to Law and Equity, being Ministers of God to the People for good, and having no other Interest but the Welfare of the Publick; *Mercy and Truth* will preserve their Persons, and their *Thrones* will be upholden by *Mercy*, Prov. xx. 28. When *Kings* become *nursing Fathers*, and *Queens* *nursing Mothers* to the Church of God; and the Example of their Virtue and Piety, renders them as conspicuous as their high Station; the Hearts of the Subjects will naturally be filled with Love and Affection, with Esteem and Veneration for them,

them, as well as with a Sense of Duty towards them; and the Authority they are vested with, will be only such a paternal Care, in the Exercise of which they will justly be look'd upon and honour'd as *Benefactors*. This is very elegantly express'd by *David* in the Place before-cited: where, after those Words of Instruction, *He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God*, he immediately adds, *And he shall be as the Light of the Morning, when the Sun arises, even a Morning without Clouds; as the tender Grass springing out of the Earth, by clear shining after Rain.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. When, in Consequence of this the People obeys, not only for Fear, but also for Conscience-sake; and not for Conscience-sake only, but also out of Love and Choice, in a Sense of their own Happiness: When they become unanimous in their Counsels and Designs; and every one, free from all Fear of any Incroachment upon their just Rights, their Liberties and Properties, discharges his Duty in his proper Station with Fidelity and Cheerfulness: This, in the Nature of Things, will establish a Government with Firmness and Security at Home; and spread Dread and Terror, upon its *Enemies abroad*. *Righteousness*, in the natural Tendency of the Thing itself, *will exalt a Nation*; as, on the contrary, *Sin* will be a *Reproach to any People*. But Secondly, the Providence of God, does moreover in a peculiar Manner most frequently concern itself, in blessing and prospering the Designs of pious Princes: *The King that faithfully judges the Poor, his Throne shall be established for ever*, Prov. xxix. 14. Notwithstanding the greatest natural Security from second Causes, yet, *except the Lord keep the City, the Watch-man Soldier may awake in vain*. Here therefore is the Establishment
of

of the Throne of the Righteous ; that it is under the sure protection of *him*, whose *Kingdom ruleth over all*. We read, *2 Chron. xvii. 10.* (where is set down the good Character before-cited of *Jehoshaphat* King of *Judah* ; that the *Lord was with him*, and *established the Kingdom in his Hand* ; and the fear of the *Lord fell upon all the Kingdoms of the Lands that were round about Judah*, so that they made no War against *Jehoshaphat*. And we of this Nation enjoy at this Day the happy Effects of the Blessings of Providence upon the pious Princess he has set over us ; in giving her such signal Successes against the common Enemy, as we may reasonably hope will soon terminate in a safe, honourable, and lasting Peace.

3. IT remains in the *Third* and last Place, by Way of Application, to consider briefly what the Duty of Subjects is, who have the Happiness of living under such Governors, as follow the Example, and answer the Character given of good King *Hezekiah* in the Text.

AND I. 'Tis their Duty to return Thanks to God, for the Benefits they enjoy under the happy Influence of a pious Example and a wise Administration. 'Tis *St Paul's* Exhortation, not only to pray, but also to give Thanks, for Kings, and for all that are in Authority ; as being those under whose Protection we lead a quiet and peaceable Life, and by whose Care we are encouraged to live in all Godliness and Honesty. To be thankful to God, whose Instruments and Vicegerents pious Governors are ; (and who is therefore in this Respect in a more especial Manner the principal and supreme Cause of the Blessings conveyed to Us through their Hands ;) is rendering unto God the things that are God's, at the same Time

Time that we make just Acknowledgment to *Cæsar* of what is due to *Cæsar*.

AND as we must not be unthankful to God, for Blessings received ; so we must take Care, not to express our Joy and Gratitude in an improper Manner. We must declare our Thankfulness, not by unseemly Mirth, not in Rioting and Debauchery ; but by the sincere Practice of that Religion, the Preservation of which is the Conclusion of all our Prayers ; and by Acts of steady Affection to that Government, the Support of which is the Foundation of all our Hopes.

2dly, 'Tis the Duty of Subjects under pious Governors, not only to acknowledge, that, *seeing by Them they enjoy great Quietness, and that very worthy Deeds are done unto the Nation by Their Providence*, therefore they * *accept it always and in all Places with all Thankfulness* ; but they must show forth their real Gratitude, by Imitation of the Example set them from the Throne, and by a strict Observation of the Laws against Profaneness, Debauchery and Immorality, so often recommended to them from thence, as the only certain Means of securing the Continuance of the Favour and Blessing of God, both upon them and their Prince. They must show forth their Gratitude by uniting all Hearts and Hands to promote, each in their proper Station, with all Diligence and Faithfulness, the Safety and Honour of the Government ; by laying aside all private Animosities and Contentions among themselves ; and by putting a stop (as much as in them lies) to all groundless Jealousies and unreasonable Suspensions, which tend to abate Mens

* Acts xxiv. 2.

Affection

Affection towards their Governors, and to bring Difficulties upon the Administration of publick Affairs.

3dly, 'Tis the Duty of Subjects under all, and much more under pious and religious Governors, to offer up constantly for them, according to the Exhortation of the Apostle, *Supplications, Prayers and Intercessions*: That God would be pleased to give them Understanding and Knowledge, Strength and Ability, to go in and out before a great People; that he would enable them to bear the great Weight and Burden of Publick Business, assist them to undergo the manifold Difficulties arising from the Uncertainties of all humane Affairs, and bless them in all their just Undertakings, with Prosperity and Success. God has hitherto blessed her present Majesty with unparallell'd Success, against the common Enemy of our Religion and Liberties: 'Tis our Duty to pray for a Continuation of the same Success, 'till the War abroad shall be brought to its desired Conclusion; and that, after that, we may be made a happy People at Home, by Peace and Unity and mutual Confidence among our selves; by a firm Establishment of the wise Constitution of our Government, for a Succession of many Generations; by a sincere Reformation of Manners among all Sorts and Degrees of Men; and an universal hearty Concern for the great and weightier Matters of Religion, more than for Things of Controversy and uncertain Dispute: That Humility, Love and Peaceableness, Righteousness and Equity, Diligence, Faithfulness and Truth, may possess the Hearts of Men of all Ranks and Conditions among us: That God would be pleased to inspire her Majesty with a discerning Heart, a wise and understanding Spirit;

Spirit; to bless her with able Counsellors, with righteous and just Officers in all Places of Trust; with a dutiful and obedient People: That *the Queen* may rejoice in thy strength, O Lord, and be exceeding glad of thy Salvation: That thou mayest give her her Heart's Desire, and not deny her the Request of her Lips: That thou mayest prevent her with the Blessings of Goodness, and make her Honour great in thy Salvation, and crown her with Glory and great Worship; That thou mayest give her a long Life here, and a longer and happier hereafter, even for ever and ever.

S E R M O N V.

Preach'd in the

Parish-Church of St. James's Westminster,
on Tuesday, November 7, 1710.

Being the Day of Thanksgiving for the
Successes of the foregoing Campaign.

P S A L M cxlv. 2:

*Every Day will I bless thee, and I will
praise thy Name for ever and ever.*

THE particular Occasion, upon which this Psalm was composed, is not known: But in general, that it was occasioned by some extraordinary Blessing, such as Success and Victory over powerful Enemies, or some other the like remarkable Interposition of Providence; is evident from the whole Course of the Psalm. For the Author of it, beginning with high Expressions of Joy and Thankfulness, (*ver. 1.*) *I will extol thee, O God, my King, and will bless thy Name for ever and ever; every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy Name for ever and ever;* proceeds in the 4th ver. to declare, that the Ground of this his Joy and Thankfulness, was some mighty Act; some publick and eminent Interposition of Providence

in his Behalf : One Generation, says he, *shall praise thy Works to another, and shall declare thy mighty Acts ; I will speak of the glorious Honour of thy Majesty, and of thy wondrous Works : and Men shall speak of the Might of thy terrible Acts, and I will declare thy Greatness : And ver. 11. They shall speak of the Glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy Power ; to make known to the Sons of Men his mighty Acts ; and the glorious Majesty of his Kingdom.* After which he goes on, from the consideration of past Mercies, to infer the reasonableness of Men's depending upon the same Providence for the continuance of his Protection in Time to come ; if by a religious Behaviour they approve themselves worthy of his Care and Favour. *Ver. 18, The Lord is nigh unto all them call upon him, to all them that call upon him faithfully : he will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their Cry and will save them : The Lord preserveth all them that love him, but all the wicked will be destroy.* And then he concludes in the last Verse, with Expressions of Joy and Thanksgiving, as he began in the first ; *My Mouth shall speak the Praise of the Lord, and let all Flesh bless his holy Name for ever and ever.*

THE Application of this Discourse of the Psalmist, to our present Occasion ; is very obvious. God has done for *Us*, Things no less wonderful and remarkable, than for the *Jews* of old ; and it becomes *Us* to praise him after the same Pattern, which the inspired Psalmist drew up for *their* Use. It becomes *Us every Day* to give Thanks unto him, and to praise his Name for ever and ever. It concerns us to take heed that we behave ourselves worthily, upon the Mercies we have receiv'd ; that we be found in the

Number

Number of those that *love him*, and of those that *call upon him* in Faithfulness and Truth. And when *this* is our Case; then it will become us with humble Confidence, to depend upon his Promise for further Protection, that he who is *righteous in all his Ways*, and *holy in all his Works*, will continue to be *nigh unto us*; to *preserve* and support us; and be always ready to hear and *fulfil the Desire* of them that *fear and obey him*.

THE Words of the Text consist of two Parts.

1st, A DECLARATION of that *Disposition of Mind*, which ought to be found in such Persons, as have received great Mercies from God; And,

2^{dly}, AN Account of the *outward Effects* of that pious Disposition, in Acts of publick Praise and Thanksgiving to God.

THE former is a grateful and due *Sense* of God's Goodness. The latter, is the *Fruit and Consequence* of that just Sense of Things upon the Mind; showing forth itself in external Acts of Worship, and in calling upon others to join with us in *publishing* the Praises of him, whose Power is so conspicuous in all great Events, and whose *tender Mercies are over all his Works*.

BUT there is no need to insist separately upon each Part of this Distinction; because, though the Things themselves are really *distinct*, yet they must always be supposed to *accompany* each other. For where the Mind is *inwardly* and deeply possessed with a just Sense of the Goodness of God, the *external Behaviour* cannot but of necessity be answerable to the *inward Sense* and Disposition of the Mind: And where the *outward Actions* are full of proper Expressions of Gra-

titude, and professed Acknowledgments of the Divine Goodness ; though *God only* can know the Heart, yet *Men* must always charitably suppose, that the inward Sense and Disposition of the *Mind*, is agreeable to the Character of the outward *Action*. There is no need therefore for *Us* to distinguish, between *Thankfulness* as 'tis a Habit and Temper of the *Mind*, or as 'tis an *Expression* of that Temper in our *Behaviour* and *Actions*. For these things ought always to go together, as in sincere Persons they really do ; And in the un sincere, where they do not, yet to the Eye of the World, which is all *We* can judge of, they must of Necessity appear to do so. *We* cannot, therefore, but treat of these Things as Synonymous ; and, when we exhort Men to the Duty of Thankfulness, must always understand those *external Actions*, which are the proper *Expressions*, and ought always to be the real Significations, of a grateful *Mind*. Wherefore, without distinguishing between these two Branches, we may look upon the Text as one single Proposition ; and take the latter Part, as only an Explication of the former. *Every Day will I bless thee* ; or, as it is in the old Translation, *Every Day will I give Thanks unto thee ; and praise thy Name for ever and ever.*

THAT which is more particularly remarkable in the Words ; is the Expression, *Every Day*. As if every Day of our Lives, were to be a Day of Thanksgiving ; and our Expressions of Gratitude, as uninterrupted as our Breath. The meaning is ; that as we are directed by the Apostle to *Pray without ceasing* ; and, by our Lord to petition our heavenly Father constantly for the continuance of our daily Food, in acknowledgment of our perpetual Dependence upon
 Providence,

Providence, for the very Breath we draw, and for the Bread we daily eat : So we ought to be no less constantly and habitually thankful to God for the Benefits *we have received*, than we are importunate in our Petitions to him for the Things *we want*. In every Thing, giving Thanks, as St Paul expresses it, 1 Thess. v. 18. and Eph. v. 20. Giving Thanks always for all Things unto God, even the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

T H E R E are some Things, which we enjoy in common with *all the Creatures* of God ; Life and Breath, and the common Protection and Preservation of Providence. And for these, we are to join in that great and universal Choir, which St John in his Vision so elegantly describes, Rev. v. 13. and iv. 11. Every Creature which is in Heaven and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them, beard I, saying ;——Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power ; for thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they are, and were created. There are other Gifts, peculiar to Men ; Understanding and Knowledge, Reason and the Use of Speech, a Capacity of searching out and meditating upon the Works of God. And for these Faculties, we are to express our Gratitude, by employing them in his Service ; by promoting his Glory, and by so behaving our selves in the Exercise of our Dominion over the inferior Creation, that *all the Works* of God, over which he has made Man the Lord, may with our Tongues praise him, and magnify him for ever.

T H E R E are other Blessings peculiar to particular Nations : and for these we are to glorify God, by

a particular thankful Acknowledgment, and by the proper Use of such respective Blessings.

IF the Providence of God has planted us in a fruitful Country, and his Goodness successively crowns our Years with a perpetual Increase; we are then to express our Thankfulness by Temperance and Sobriety, by Charity and Works of Mercy to the Poor, by taking great Care to prevent Luxury and Debauchery, Pride and Vanity, Sloth and Forgetfulness of God; which are the Vices too apt to spring up out of Prosperity and Plenty. *When thou hast eaten, and art full, said Moses in his last and wise Exhortation to the Israelites; then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good Land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his Commandments, and his Judgments and his Statutes, which I command thee this Day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly Houses, and dwelt therein;—and thy Silver and thy Gold,—and all that thou hast, is multiplied; then thine Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, &c. Deut. viii. 10.*

IF God has endued us with Learning and Wisdom, with Understanding and Knowledge, above other Nations of our Fellow-Creatures; whom we are too apt to despise under the Name of Barbarians; tyrannizing over their Weakness, and insulting over their Ignorance; not considering who it is that has taught any of us more than the Beasts of the Field, and made us wiser than the Fowls of Heaven: The proper Way wherein our Gratitude should show forth it self for * these Things, is in applying Learning to the Advantage of Religion, and to the promoting of the

* Job xxxv. 11.

Glory

Glory of God in the World; by increasing *real Knowledge*, and not perplexing it with *imaginary Subtilties*; by discovering *Truth*, and not colouring over *Errors*; by propagating what is *certain*, and not contending for *disputable Opinions*.

I f God has vouchsafed us *the glorious Light of the Gospel*, and the *Knowledge of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ*; while many other Nations lie yet in the Darkneſs of Heatheniſm, and have not the Knowledge of the Laws of God: The beſt and moſt acceptable Method of returning our Thanks for ſo ineſtimable a Bleſſing, is, that we endeavour to propagate the Chriſtian Knowledge with Simplicity to *Others*; and that we take Care above all Things to obey the Truth *ourſelves*, in the Love and in the Purity thereof.

I f God has not only placed us under the Light of the Gospel, but bleſſed us alſo yet further with greater Purity of Religion, by a *Reformation* from the groſſeſt Errors and Idolatrous Superſtitions where-with even the Chriſtian World itſelf had been almoſt univerſally overſpread, thro' the Corruption of that * *Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth, which hath made all Nations to drink of the Wine of her Fornication*, and in whom is found the Blood of the *Prophets and Saints*, and of *all that are ſlain upon the Earth*: If God, I ſay, has bleſſed us with a *Reformation* from theſe groſſeſt of Corruptions; the moſt ſuitable Return of Thankfulneſs for ſuch an Advantage, is to purſue the *Spirit and Deſign* of that Reformation; and to take great Care, that we be not deluded inſenſibly to fall back again, and † *join in Affinity with the People of theſe Abominations*; but

* Rev. xvii. 5, 14. viii. 18, 24. † Ezra ix. 14.
that

that we stedfastly take more and more heed, without Regard to any *Human Authority* whatsoever, and without * *calling any Man Father or Master upon Earth*, to adhere to the divine Authority of the *Scriptures* only, as the Adequate Rule of Faith and Manners; which is the sole Foundation of the *Protestant Religion*, and the only effectual Means of preventing all *Differences* among those who sincerely desire to understand and practise the Truth.

IF God has preserved unto Us our *lawful Liberties* and *Properties*, under a mild and well-constituted Government; when almost all other Nations upon Earth, are subject to arbitrary and illegal Dominion; which is that Form of Government, where-with God threatned to punish the *Israelites* for their Rebellion against him, when he declared unto them by the Prophet *Samuel* the † *Manner of the King that should reign over them*: Our Thankfulness for the continuance of such a Blessing, can by no other Way be so properly expressed, as by making it our chief Care to *use* that Liberty which we so justly boast of, and which we have thought worth the defending almost with infinite Blood and Treasure, so as not to *abuse* it to Licentiousness and Wantonness: To *use* our Liberty so, as not to run into the contrary Extreme of Lawlessness and Confusion; To *use* it so, as not to break through the Obligations of regular Government and legal Restraints.

Lastly, IF God has crowned all our other Blessings, with that which is the Security and Preservation of them all; a constant Series of unparallell'd *Success*, and *Victories* beyond Example great and complete, against the potentest Enemy that ever yet attempted

* Matt. xxiii. 9.

† 1 Sam. viii. 9.

to enslave the World ; *What shall we render unto the Lord for these his Benefits*, and what Returns shall we make him for such a Blessing as this ? The Answer to this Question is of great Importance ; and the serious Consideration of it, is that without which our religious Assemblies would be but mere Hypocrisy, and our Prayers no better than a mocking of God.

1st, THEREFORE, if we will make worthy Returns to God, for these his Benefits, in giving us such Victories and Success, we must in the first Place be careful to make ourselves truly sensible, from *what Hand* these Blessings do *really come*. We must be fully persuaded, that 'tis *God* that gives Victory in the Day of Battle, and that Success is owing to the Protection of the Almighty ; that 'tis he that *breaketh the Bow, and knappeth the Spear in sunder, and burneth the Chariots in the Fire*. That which is apt to deceive Men in this Matter, is their observing Things to depend upon *Second Causes*, and to be brought about by the Operation of *Natural Agents*. But what are *Second Causes*, and what are *Natural Agents*, but mere *Instruments* in the Hand of him who *ruleth over all* ? All other Things, excepting *Men* only who are free Agents, have no Pretence to be esteemed *Causes* in any Sense at all ; but are meerly as *Instruments* in the Hand of the Workman. And by these Things, the Counsels and Designs even of *Men* themselves, of the wisest Men and of the strongest Forces, are perpetually over-ruled to quite different Events, than they intended or could possibly foresee. So that the Issues of all great Actions, and the main Turns of all worldly Affairs, depend entirely upon such *Accidents*, as are wholly in the Hand of God to direct.

direct. Which Accidents, tho' they be indeed what we vulgarly call *Natural Causes*, yet this is really nothing else but an impropriety of Speech; to call that a *Cause*, which, being Unintelligent, is in Truth nothing more than an *Instrument* in the Hand of him who is truly the efficient Cause. And this is evidently the Case, in all Unintelligent Natural Agents. Whatever *they* seem to effect, is not in reality done by *them*, but by the *Providence of God*. That the Sun runs its Course *every Day*, is no less strictly and properly the Hand of God, than that it stood still *one Day*: Nor is there any other Ground, why the *one* is by all Men readily ascribed to God, and *the other* they vulgarly fancy is done naturally without him; but only this one foolish Reason, that what God does *once*, they see and acknowledge is done by *him*; but what he does always, they therefore think 'tis not *he* does it *at all*. The Scripture, (and Reason also) teaches us more justly to *acknowledge God in all our Ways*; and to be sensible who it is, that, being the Author and Director of Nature, and of all those Accidents which we can neither foresee nor prevent, does thereby dispose and order, as he pleases, the Events of all Humane Affairs. *There are many Devices in Man's Heart; but the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*, Prov. xix. 21.

2dly, WE must not only in a meer *Speculative* Manner, be convinced that 'tis the Hand of God which bringeth about all great Events, and crowns us with Victory and Success; but we must so consider it and meditate upon it in a *Practical* Manner, as to be truly thankful to him for the Advantages we reap thereby. The *Jews* in *Moses's* Time knew very well who it was, that made them ride on the high
Places

*Places of the Earth, and—to suck Honey out of the Rock; and Oyl out of the flinty Rock; who it was, that led them in the Wilderness like Sheep, and kept them as the Apple of his Eye; that suffered no Man to do them wrong, but reprov'd even Kings for their Sake. Yet even of these very Persons, who knew all these Things so perfectly, and had seen them with their own Eyes; did that holy Man complain, Deut. xxxii. 15. that Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; that he forsok the God which made him, and lightly esteem'd the Rock of his Salvation. King Hezekiab, knew very well who it was that gave him a Sign, and recover'd him when he was sick unto Death, and deliver'd him out of the Hand of the King of Babylon by a Miracle: Yet even of him, the Scripture complains, that he * rendered not again, according to the Benefit done unto him; for his Heart was lifted up; therefore there was Wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Even so we also, how well soever we apprehend in a Metaphysical and Speculative Manner, that God is the Disposer of the Events of all Human Affairs; yet what are we the better, if it does not affect us Morally, in filling our Hearts with Gratitude, and our Mouths with Praises, and our Lives with Acts of Obedience to him, after all the great Things that he has done for us? This is the only Return, that frail and dependent Creatures are capable of making, to the supreme Lord and Governour of all Things. † For our Goodness extendeth not to him; neither can Man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise, may be profitable unto himself. But Thankful and Obedient to him, we can be; and most inexcusable and base is our Ingratitude, if his Mercies do not so affect us. Yet*

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25.

† Job xxii. 2.

most prone is our corrupt Nature, to become thus forgetful of our supreme Benefactor : And the very *Frequency* of great and unexpected Blessings, is itself, to careless and profane Persons, an Occasion of neglecting those Things as common, which, if they had more rarely happened, would have been more carefully observed. In the Course of this great and bloody War, almost *every Campaign* has offered as much Matter of Thanksgiving, as at other Times the whole Series even of a successful War has been used to furnish. And for this very Reason, because we have been obliged to return Thanks *so often*, unthinking and careless Persons have little or no Disposition to be truly thankful and devout *at all*. The proper Remedy against this Evil, is to consider seriously and distinctly, what it is that we have hitherto been delivered from, by those Successes, for which we have so often and with so much Reason been commanded to return publick Thanks. The War, wherein we are now engaged, seems to be the last Struggle for the *two* Things, which alone are valuable in human Life ; *Liberty*, and *Religion* : In opposition to *arbitrary Power*, which destroys all Property ; and in opposition to *humane Authority and Infallibility sitting in the Seat of God*, which is totally inconsistent with all true Religion. Had it pleased God to permit our Enemies to have been as successful against *Us*, as we have hitherto been victorious over *them* ; we had long since been Slaves, deprived of all legal Right to our temporal Possessions ; and, for our Religion, had been worshipping Stocks and Stones, and Souls of Men departed, instead of * *Him that made the Heavens and the Earth and the Sea, and all Things*

* Rev. xiv. 7.

that

that are therein. Or, had Providence permitted us to have been deluded, with the Pretences of a false and deceitful *Peace*, the Effects of such an ill-grounded and insecure Agreement, might possibly have been much more fatal, than the continuance even of the bloodiest and most expensive *War*. And the growing Mischiefs of one disadvantageous *Treaty*, might have been more difficult to retrieve than the transient Miseries even of many unprosperous and unsuccessful *Campaigns*. For we have to deal with an Enemy, with whom no Peace is to be had longer, than we have Power to enforce it; An Enemy, whose Character is exactly given by the Prophet *Daniel*, *cb. viii. ver. 23.* *A King of fierce Countenance,——who shall destroy wonderfully;——and through his Policy also he shall cause Craft to prosper,——and he shall magnify himself in his Heart; and by Peace shall he destroy many.*

3dly, THAT our Thanksgiving may become truly acceptable; it must be accompanied with such *Circumstances*, and followed with such *Behaviour*, as may show the *Words* of our *Mouths* to be real Expressions of the *Thoughts* of our *Hearts*, and that our Praises proceed not out of *feigned Lips*. Our Joy must express itself, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Frenzy and Debauchery; but in Praises and Thanksgivings accompanied with Sobriety and Purity, with Modesty and Humility; such as becomes those who mean to honour God with Piety and sincere Devotion in the Practice of that Religion, the Preservation of which from being over-run with the Tyranny and Superstition of Popery, is one of the principal Grounds of our rejoicing for that Success wherewith God has hitherto

blessed us. For it becomes us *Christians* to rejoice, not in *Ravage* and *Bloodshed*, not in the *Misery* and *Destruction* even of our *Enemies* themselves: It becomes us to rejoice, not upon the Increase of our *Power* for *Dominion's* Sake; not upon the enlarging our *Territories*, and aggrandizing the *Honour* of our *Arms*; but in being enabled to rescue the oppress'd *Liberties* of Nations; to restore the common *Rights* of human Nature; and to secure that *Freedom of Religion*, in the denying of which consists the very Essence of *Antichristian* Iniquity. *All Nations*, after their *Fashion*, return their *Thanks* to the *Almighty*, for *Victory* and *Success* over their *Enemies*; and the greatest *Tyrants* and *Oppressors* of *Mankind*, pretend to praise *God*, whenever their *Arms*, by the *Permission* of *Providence*, and for the *Punishment* of the *World*, prevail over the *Weakness* of their neighbouring Nations: But these their *Thanksgivings* are *Prophaneness*; and to presume to offer *Praises* to *God*, for the Increase of *Power* for *Power's* Sake, and for the setting up *arbitrary* and *tyrannical Dominion*, is no better than affronting of *God*, and making a *Mockery* of *Religion*. *Christians* are to desire, and to rejoice at the obtaining such *Victories* only, as tend to establish the *Rights* and *Properties* of *Mankind*, and the common *Liberties* of Nations: And our *Joy* must express itself in such a *Manner*, and be attended with such consequent *Behaviour* as is becoming the *Purity* of the *Gospel* of *Christ*. For, as the *Wisdom* which is from above, so the *Joy* also of those who are possess'd of that *Wisdom*, is * *first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits*. It becomes us to rejoice for *Success* in *War*.

* James iii. 17.

for

for no other Reason, but because 'tis the necessary and only Means of arriving at a safe and secure *Peace*. With which Blessing when it shall please God to complete and crown all our past Successes; then will it highly behove us to approve our selves indeed the *Children of Peace*, by laying aside all those unchristian *Divisions and Animosities* among our selves, which are kept up by mutual Accusations, full (as we may reasonably hope) of more *Uncharitableness* than *Truth*. The Means of causing all which to be forgotten, is first to unite heartily in pursuing the Things wherein we all agree; and then to wait with *Charity* in those wherein we differ, 'till even in these also God shall reveal the *Truth* unto us. Let us consider, that *Force* and *Violence*, without Regard to Right and Equity, are the Means by which our *Adversaries* propagate their *Power*, and (as they are pleas'd to call it) their *Religion* also: For which Reason principally, their *Power* is a *publick Enemy* to Mankind, and their *Religion* properly *Antichristian*. But we profess to make *War*, not for the Sake of *Conquest*, but only to obtain to our selves a secure *Peace*. And our *Religion* teaches us, as to desire the *publick*, so to maintain (as far as possible) *private Peace* also among ourselves; by mutual Love, *Charity* and Good-will; as becomes those who profess the *Gospel of Peace*.

LET us endeavour therefore to understand rightly, the full *Nature and Design* of the Religion we profess. Which consists mainly in these two Things. 1st, That the *Scripture* (as I before observ'd) is the only *Rule* of our *Faith*. Which, if duly attended to, would speedily put an End to all *Differences* and *Contentions*, among those who consider what they mean when they make that *Profession*. And 2^{dly}, That

the *Commandments of God* are infinitely of more Importance, than any *speculative Notions* or *Opinions* of Men. Which thing, if seriously consider'd, would as effectually regulate our *Practice* in the Conduct of *Life*, as the adhering stedfastly to the only true Rule of *Faith*, would at once cut off all *Disputes* in the Matter of our *Belief*. Our *Lusts* and *Follies*, our *Debauchery* and *Profaneness*, our unreasonable and unchristian *Uncharitableness* and *Divisions* among our *selves*; are worse and more dangerous *Enemies*, than those we fight with *abroad*. And unless we speedily reform these Abuses, and cease to provoke God by the continued Corruption of our Manners; the same Divine Providence, which has hitherto wonderfully fought for us against the potentest Monarch that ever yet aim'd at the Empire of the World; can as easily, if he pleases, turn back our Successes speedily to our entire Destruction; and in a Moment bring upon us, after all our Victories, the very same *Event* as would have been the Effect of a continually unsuccessful *War*; at the Time when we are just flattering ourselves with the Hopes of being put into secure Possession, of the Blessings of a safe and lasting *Peace*.

SER-

The Government of Passion.

S E R M O N VI.

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N,

A T

St. James's Chapel, on Sunday the 7th
of January, 1710-11.

Publish'd by Her MAJESTY'S Special Command.

E P H E S. iv. 26.

Be ye Angry, and Sin not.

SINCE in the ordinary Conduct of human Life, and in the common Affairs of the World. Natural Wisdom teaches us, that the only sure and effectual Means of avoiding great Evils, is the preventing of small ones; and that the Beginnings of Mischief are much more easily prevented, than the Progress of them stopped, or the Consequences of them remedied.

SINCE under the Improvements of *Philosophy* in the heathen World, the Principal and most useful Precepts given Men for the Government of their Passions, was to watch continually, and guard themselves against the *first Emotions* of Passion rising up in Opposition to Reason; to stop the first breaking out of a silent Stream, which by Neglect would swell into an overflowing Torrent; to extinguish the first Spark of a scarce discernable Fire, which by Degrees would prevail into a destroying Conflagration:

SINCE by the still purer and more refined Precepts of the *Doctrine of Christ*, we are obliged to govern even our very *Thoughts* and *Desires*; to pray against the *Temptations* and *first Occasions* of Sin; to lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree, by suppressing all corrupt *Affections*, by restraining all inordinate *Appetites*, by moderating and keeping even a strict Hand over *innocent Inclinations*; by plucking out, if Need be, even a *right Eye*, and cutting off a *right Hand*.

SINCE these Things (I say) are so; it may well seem strange, to any one that is not versed in the *Jewish* Manner of speaking, how St Paul should come to express himself after such a Sort, as if he intended to indulge Men in letting loose the Reins to their Passions, as far as was consistent with Innocency; and thought it safe to permit Men to allow themselves in the Gratification of their Anger, provided they did but just keep themselves without the Borders of Sin: *Be ye Angry, and Sin not*. As if the Bounds between what is excusable and criminal, were marked with so distinct a limit, that Men might be trusted to discern with Ease, when they were at the utmost Extent of their lawful Liberty; or that it could be supposed Men had so perfect a Command of themselves,

is to be able to stop suddenly at an appointed Mark in a swift Career, and say (when they please) to their Passion, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.*

OUR Saviour, in his Divine Sermon upon the Mount, makes it in almost every Instance, his peculiar Improvement of Moral Obligations under the Gospel, to warn Men against the *Approaches* and *Tendencies* towards those Sins, whereof only the gross *Acts* were forbidden under the Law. * *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, thou shalt not commit Adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, has already committed Adultery with her in his Heart. Ye have heard it has been said by them of old, thou shalt not forswear thyself: But I say unto you, swear not at all, Ye have heard it has been said, an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil. Ye have heard it has been said, thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy: But I say unto you, love your Enemies. And in the Case before us, of Wrath and Anger: Ye have heard, says he, that it has been said by them of old Time, thou shalt not kill: But I say unto you, that whosoever is Angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-Fire. Nay, in some of the antientest Copies of this Gospel, those Words of Restriction, (without Cause,) whosoever shall be Angry without a Cause, are omitted; and the Declaration is made in the most general Terms. Whosoever is angry with his Brother, shall be in danger of the Judgment: Men being apt enough of themselves, to put in such Restrictions as may be equitably*

* Matt. v. 27.

presumed;

presumed; and there being no need, in the Body of the Law itself, to express such excepted Cases or such Limitations, to which in all Reason and Equity, it may, however, be supposed the Law cannot extend. This makes it still the more worthy of enquiry, whence it might come to pass, that *St Paul* expresses himself upon this Subject in such a Manner, as may seem to give some *Indulgence* to such *Degrees* of Passion as are not directly sinful; (*Be ye angry, and Sin not*;) when yet both by Experience and the Reason of Things, and by our Saviour's express Caution in all Matters of this Nature, 'tis evident that Passions indulged to the utmost Bounds of Innocency, are much harder to restrain from entering into sinful Degrees, than it was to prevent their Beginnings or arising at first.

Now the true Account of this Matter, seems plainly to be this. The Words, *Be ye Angry*, are not a Permission, as they may seem to be when taken alone; but, according to the Nature and Use of the *Jewish* Language, they are Part of a *Single* Proposition with those that follow. *Be ye Angry, and Sin not*; that is, *Take heed and beware of sinful Anger. Indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin. Or, If at any Time ye be provoked, then take particular Care that ye fall not into Sin.* For such is the Idiom of the *Jewish* Language; to express that in *two* distinct Propositions, which ought so to be understood, as if they were put in *one*. There are many other Texts in Scripture, which will confirm this Interpretation; and the comparing them with this, will reciprocally afford much Light, towards the true Understanding of several of those Passages.

IN the old Testament; *Mal. i. 2, 3.* Jacob *have I loved, saith God, and Esau have I hated.* The Propositions are not to be understood afunder, but to be taken together as one; Jacob *have I loved, more than Esau.* For, God did not intend to express *Hatred towards Esau,* but only to love *Jacob comparatively, with a great Love.* *Nahum iii. 14.* *Fortify strong holds,—there—shall the Sword cut thee off:* The Intention is not to *exhort* Nineveh to fortify herself; but to declare, how much soever she *does* fortify her self, yet shall the Sword cut her off. And so *Isaiah viii. 9.* *Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in Pieces.* i. e. How much so ever ye strengthen yourselves, yet shall ye be broken. Again; *Ecclus. xxx. 9.* *Cocker thy Child, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he will bring thee to Heaviness:* The Proposition is but one; if thou indulge thy Child, he will bring thee to Sorrow. *Jer. vii. 22.* *I spake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-Offerings or Sacrifices; but this Thing commanded I them, saying, obey my Voice:* The two Parts of this Sentence of the Prophet, are not to be taken separately, as if he affirmed that God did not require Burnt-Offerings at all; (for 'tis certain he did command them in most *express* Words in the Law;) but the whole is to be understood together; that God did not *insist* upon Burnt-Offerings *so much;* as upon Obedience to the Commandments of the *Moral Law.* There is a like Expression, *Hos. vi. 6.* *I desired Mercy, and not Sacrifice:* The meaning is not, that God did not require Sacrifice; but that he desired Mercy, rather than Sacrifice; and (as it follows in the very next Words) *the Knowledge of the Lord,*

Lord, more than Burnt-Offerings. And thus also must be understood that Passage in *Ezekiel*, chap. xx. 25. *I gave them also Statutes that were not good, and Judgments by which they should not live:* The meaning is not, evil Statutes; God forbid: But Statutes, which comparatively were not good; and Judgments which were not so profitable, as moral ones, to cause them to live.

IN the new Testament, the same Manner of Expression, agreeable to the Nature of the *Jewish* Language, is likewise frequently used; and it is necessary to be taken Notice of, in order to the true understanding of several Passages. *I am not sent*, saith our Saviour himself, discoursing with the Woman of *Canaan*, *but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel?* St *Mat.* xv. 24. His Meaning is not absolute, (as might seem from the first Part of the Sentence,) that he was not sent at all to any others than the *Jews* only; but that he was not sent so soon, so immediately, so principally; his Mission was not to be made known so early, to any other Nation, as to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. For that he was also, in process of Time, to be a Light to lighten the *Gentiles*, as well as to be the glory of his People *Israel*, the Scripture of the Prophets expressly enough declared; and our Saviour himself in this very Place sufficiently intimates, when immediately after that seeming Refusal, yet he effectually granted this Stranger's Request, by healing the Infirmary of her Daughter. And in his Instructions to his Disciples, chap. x. 5. he speaks with less Obscurity; *Go not into the Way of the Gentiles; — but go rather to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel.* Which afterwards was still more clearly expressed by the Apostles, *Acts* xiii. 46. *It was necessary*

essary that the Word of God should first be spoken to the Jews; but afterwards to the Gentiles. But, not to mention any other Places, there is one Expression of St Paul, of this Nature, more remarkable to the present Purpose, than any other Passage in the whole Scripture. In the vith Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, at the 17th Verse; God be thanked, saith he, that ye were the Servants of Sin: But ye have obeyed from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, which was delivered you. God be thanked, that ye were the Servants of Sin: It may seem a very strange and unusual Expression, according to the Manner of speaking in modern Languages: But in the Jewish Idiom it was very intelligible, that the two Parts of the Sentence should be taken as one; God be thanked, for that ye, who once were the Servants of Sin, have since obeyed from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, which was delivered you.

AND thus likewise in the Words of the Text, Be ye Angry, and Sin not. That is, Take heed and beware of sinful Anger; indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin; or, if at any Time ye be provoked, then take particular Care that ye fall not into Sin.

IT is the same Caution, as in the Government of all other Passions or Desires. So use the World, as not abusing it; So rejoice, as though ye rejoiced not; So weep, as those that wept not; So be angry, as that ye Sin not. The meaning of the Words, being thus explain'd: That which remains, is, 1st, that I endeavour, in a practical manner, to represent unto you, what the Kind or Degree of that Anger is, which must be charged as Sinful. And 2^{dly}, that I briefly set before you some of the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies, of allowing our Passion to arise to such a sinful Degree.

BEFORE

BEFORE I enter upon which Heads, it may be proper to premise two Things. 1st, That what shall be said concerning the Nature of *Anger* in particular, may with little Variation be easily applied in general to the Government of *all other Passions* whatsoever. So that though the present Subject of my Discourse be *particular*, yet, by serious Meditation, it may without Difficulty be made *universally* useful, towards regulating the Conduct of human Life. And 2^{dly}, That those Things which Scholastick Writers upon this Subject, have made burdensom to the Memory, and intricate to the Understanding, by numerous Definitions, and more nice than necessary Distinctions; I shall endeavour to reduce under one single Head, that, what to Persons of all *Capacities* is their Duty to *practise*, may, without affording Matter for Dispute or Subtilty, be by all Persons equally understood.

I. THESE Things being premised; I proceed 1st to enquire, what the *Kind* or *Degree* of that Anger is, which must be charged as Sinful. And this will best be understood, by considering briefly what the Nature and Use of our Passions is, and for what Intent they were implanted in us by our all-wise Creator.

WHERE *Reason* and Understanding are perfect; there is no Room for any *Passion* or *Commotion*. And therefore in the most perfect Being, there is no Passion. In *God*, there is, properly speaking, neither Anger nor Complacency, neither Love nor Hatred, neither Joy nor Sorrow. In Him, there is no such Thing as Desire or Aversion; no such Commotion, as either Hope or Fear. But his Actions are determined always by perfect and unmixed Reason, by eternal and unchangeable

unchangeable Equity ; which, in the supreme Mind, is an uninterrupted Calmness, like the Serenity of the highest Heavens. For, though the Scripture does indeed represent to *Us* the Divine Actions, as proceeding from Passions like to ours ; yet this is *not* representing them what they are really in *him*, but only in Condescension to the Weakness of *our* Apprehensions, or with Regard to their Effects upon *Us*. And as, in the same Scripture, *Hands* and *Feet* and *Eyes* are figuratively ascribed to him, who, in reality, without Shape or Figure is in all Places every where alike present ; so by the like *Analogy* only it is, that to God are sometimes ascribed *Passions*, for which there is no Place in a Mind where Reason and Understanding are perfect.

ON the contrary, where there is *no Reason* nor proper Understanding *at all* ; as in Creatures inferior to *Us* ; there, *Passions* and *Appetites* are the only Springs of Action ; and by *them* are irrational Creatures naturally and unavoidably directed.

MEN, who (like *Beasts*) are formed out of the *Dust of the Earth* ; and yet (like *Angels*) made after the *Image of God* ; are of a *middle* Nature between these two States, between perfect *Reason*, and mere irrational *Appetites* : Being indued with *Appetites* and *Passions*, to excite and stir them up to Action, where their bare abstract *Understanding* would leave them too *remiss* ; and at the same Time indued with *Reason* also, to govern and *restrain* themselves, where mere *Appetites* and *Passions* would hurry them on to Things exorbitant and unreasonable. Herein therefore particularly lies the principal Duty of *Man* ; in keeping his Passions subject to Reason, and in governing his

Appetites by that Understanding, wherewith God has distinguished him from the inferior Creation.

THE *Affections* and *Passions* are not in themselves *Evil*, (as some of the Antient Philosophers vainly imagined;) but were implanted in us by the wise Author of all Things, for excellent Ends and very useful Purposes: That we, whose mixt Nature of Body and Spirit, would otherwise have made us too *remiss*, in pursuing the Ends to which bare abstract Reason directed us; might by the *Affections* and *Passions*, under the Regulation of Reason, and subservient to it, *i. e.* by reasonable Fears and Hopes, by Love or Hatred, by Anger or Complacency, be pushed on and *excited* to be more earnest and vigorous, more constant and diligent in all those Actions of Life, which Reason *directs*, and the *Affections execute*.

BUT now, when the *Passions*, instead of obeying Reason, over-rule and govern it; when they prevail *against* Reason, so as to put Men upon doing Things which the Reason of their Minds at the same Time forbids; or, (which is much the same Thing,) when they become so violent as to abridge Men of their Liberty, and put them *beside* their Reason; so as to leave them no Room or Time to judge, whether the Thing they are doing be reasonable or no; *then* it is, that the *Passions* become truly Sinful. And *Man*, who when *Reason* governs him, is the Image of *God*; degenerates, by the Dominion of *Passion*, even below the Nature of a *Beast*. For those inferior Creatures, when they obey their Appetites, follow their *Nature*: But the Nature of *Man*, is to obey a higher Principle, even *Reason* and the *Law of God*; to which, he who is governed by *Passion*, is not Sub-
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ject, neither indeed can he be ; and therefore degenerates below his proper Nature. Which is a Folly, whereof inferior Beings are not Guilty.

FROM hence it becomes very evident, (which was the *first* Thing proposed,) what the *Kind* or *Degree* of that *Anger* is, which must be charged as Sinful: Namely, that it is *then* such, when it either puts Men *besides* the Use of their Reason, or upon acting in any sort *contrary* to it.

THE Rule is *one*, and may without Difficulty be universally understood by *all* Men ; But the Application is *infinite*, and must be made by *every one* for his own *Particular*. Every Person knows, when he considers seriously with himself ; that his Anger becomes *then* a sinful Passion, when it is stirred up *without just Cause*, or upon *any Cause* vents itself in *undecent Effects* ; when it spoils his Temper by *frequent Returns*, or by its *Violence* exposes him to unseemly *Transports*, or by * its *Continuance* degenerates into Hatred and Malice, when its *Height* is disproportionate to the *Occasion* that raised it, or unbecoming the *Character* of the Person provoked ; or the *Circumstances* be in any wise contrary to right Reason and Religion. Which Cases, though they are indeed *infinitely various*, and therefore cannot be expressed in any Methodical Direction ; yet because the Rule (as was said) is but *one* and unchangeably the same, (therefore the Application in Practice is always *Easy* : *Easy* (I mean) to be understood, that a Man is *then* always to look upon his Passion as Sinful, when it either puts him *beside* the Use of his Reason, or upon acting any Thing *contrary* to it : But not always so *Easy* to be *Practised* :

* *Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath* : The Words immediately following the Text.

Because habitual Passions, are very apt to surprise Men; and will not be prevented, but by a *constant Guard*. Yet, because 'tis a *necessary Duty*, so to prevent and guard against them; therefore in order to persuade Men to set about the Practice of what is so indispensable and of so great Importance, 'tis proper that I proceed now in the

II. *Second PLACE*, to consider some of the *Mischiefs* and *Inconveniencies*, of allowing our Passions to-prevail, in any of the foremention'd *Kinds* or *Degrees*

AND here we cannot but take Notice, that even the *Heathen* Moralists themselves, have fill'd their Discourses with Arguments against irregular and disorderly Passions; drawn from the *Indecency* and *Unseemliness* of the *Thing* it self; from the *Shame* and *Indignity*, of a *reasonable Creature's* being subject to such *unreasonable Slavery*; from the *Uneasiness* of it, to *ourselves*; from the *Injuriousness* of it, to *Others*; and from many other Considerations, which prove a Man, who is governed by his Passion, to be incapable even of true *Philosophy*, incapable of coming up to so much as the moral Improvements even of a wise *Heathen*.

AND the *Scripture* itself sometimes makes use of such *Natural Arguments*. From the *Folly* of the *Thing* itself, Ecclef. vii. 9. *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be Angry; for Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools*. Prov. xii. 16, *A Fool's Wrath is presently known, but a prudent Man covereth Shame*; and chap. xiv. ver. 17, 29. *He that is slow to Wrath, is of great Understanding; but he that is soon Angry, dealeth Foolishly; and he that is hasty of Spirit, exalteth Folly*. Again, from the *Contempt* it draws upon Men, who are ob-

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served to be guilty of this Weakness; Prov. xxv. 28. *He that hath no Rule over his own Spirit, is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls.* From the frequent Mischiefs and Damages it brings upon them; Prov. xix. 19. *A Man of great Wrath, shall suffer Punishment; for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again: And Job v. 2. Wrath killeth the foolish Man, and Envy slayeth the silly one.* Also, from the natural Excellency of the contrary Practice; Prov. xvi. 32. *He that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

BUT to us *Christians*, there are still higher Arguments to convince us of the Mischief of being governed by our Passions; and to persuade us of the Necessary, of restraining them within due Bounds. For *Us*, to indulge our Passions; is to deprive our selves wholly of that Temper, that Frame and Disposition of Mind, which is the peculiar Character and Obligation of a Christian. If a *Philosopher*, if a *wise-Heathen*, upon the common Principles of Reason and Morality; if a *Man*, upon the bare Consideration of the Dignity of his *Nature* above the Beasts that perish; is under Obligation to subdue his Appetites and Passions to Reason: How much more is a *Christian* bound, to keep himself still under stricter and more severe Restraints?

FOR when a *Christian* indulges his Passion, let him consider *who* it is, that acts so unworthily, and behaves himself so unseemly. A Man indued with Reason and Understanding: A Man, whose Reason is improved, not by *Philosophy* only, but moreover by the Knowledge of the revealed Will of God; A Man, for whom *Christ* dyed; to whom

God has been freely reconciled, and, out of mere Mercy and undeserved Compassion, vouchsafed to turn away his Anger from him.

AND against *whom* does this Person direct the Violence of his Passion? Against a *Man* like himself; against his *Friend* or his *Brother*, Bone of his Bone, and Flesh of his Flesh; one for *whom* Christ died as well as for *himself*, and by his own Blood redeem'd them *Both* from Death.

AND *what* is it *for*, that one Christian Man, is fiercely angry against another? Perhaps for a *careless Word*, for an *undesigned Provocation*, for a *difference in Opinion*; possibly for retaining a *good Conscience*, and not daring to do what the other expects of him; at most, for some slight and trivial *Offence*; for not being able to repay him his hundred *Pence*, when God has forgiven them both their ten thousand *Talents*.

NOR that one Christian may not, in a just and legal Manner, *compel* another to do what is right and equitable: Much less that Superiors should not by their Authority *oblige* Inferiors, to perform the proper Duties of their respective Stations: But that in these, and all other Cases, *Religion and Equity* be the *Ground*; and *Reason*, not *Passion*, the *Measure* of the *Compulsion*.

IF any Thing in the World could make exorbitant Passion excusable; it should seem to be when *Vice* is the Object of the Displeasure; and Concern for the *Honour of God*, the Cause of the Commotion. Nevertheless, even in *this* Case, our Saviour himself, when he was not only *reviled*, but was reviled also with *Blasphemy* against God himself; yet *reviled not again*. And Michael

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the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, yet did not bring against him a railing Accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee; Jude ix. And the Scripture accordingly directs, that a Servant of God must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth. For the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, St James iii. 17. And St Paul exhorts, Eph. iv. 31. Let all Bitterness and Wrath and Anger and Clamor and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

THERE is a remarkable History to this Purpose in the Book of *Jonah*; where, upon God's repenting to execute his Threatnings upon *Nineveh*, *Jonah* was displeased at it exceedingly, and he was very Angry; and persisted in it, that he did well to be angry, even unto Death. But God reprov'd him by the Similitude of a Gourd, at which *Jonah* was grieved when it perished suddenly; and the Lord said unto him, *Thou badst Pity on the Gourd, which came up in a Night, and perished in a Night, and should not I spare Nineveh, that great City?*

WHEN once a Man, whatever the Occasion be, gives himself up to his *Passion*; he is then out of the Use of his *Reason*, and he can never tell to what Degree of *Unreasonableness* he may be pusht on. *An angry Man stirreth up strife, and a furious Person will*

will abound in transgression. Prov. xxix. 22. As Cain's causeless Displeasure against his Brother, increased by Degrees beyond Limit, 'till it ended in Murder; so Passion let loose, even upon the most just Provocation, is like a Torrent breaking thro' a Bank; which will hardly be prevented from swelling till it leads us into Sin. *My beloved*, saith St James, let every Man be—*slow to Wrath; for the Wrath of Man*, (even though it be against what is Evil,) yet *worketh not the Righteousness of God*.

THE Cause of such disorderly Passions, is always Carelessness and want of Seriousness: The Remedy is, Consideration, Attention, and frequent Examination of a Man's self; so as to keep a constant Guard and Watchfulness over his Spirit. To be able perfectly to cure his Temper, to conquer himself wholly, and change his Disposition; is what no one ought to expect in this World; nor to be disappointed or discouraged, if he finds even the moderating it to be a Work of Difficulty and Time. But to endeavour to amend it daily, is his indispensable Duty. And he who considers how easily and suddenly he can restrain himself, at the coming in of a Superior whom he reveres among Men; must not pretend it impossible for him to govern his Passions, with the Thoughts of the perpetual Presence of God.

THERE have been some, who have alledged in Excuse for themselves, that Passage in Scripture, that the Apostles themselves were *Men of like Passions with us*. Acts xiv. 15. But the Intent of that Passage is much misunderstood, through an improper Translation. For the Intention of St Paul and Barnabas speaking in that Manner to the Men of Lystra,

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was not to say that they were Men of *like Passions*, in the Sense we now usually understand the Word; but that they were Men of *like Infirmities*, mortal Men like themselves, subject to *Diseases*, *Casualties* and *Death*; and therefore, not to be worshipped as *Gods*. So *James v. 17. Elias was a Man subject to like Passions as we are*: The meaning is not, that he was a *passionate*, but that he was a *mortal* Man like one of us, and yet interceded effectually with God. But if the meaning was literal, that the Apostles and Prophets had the same *Passions* with *Us*, (as undoubtedly they naturally had,) yet this is no Excuse for *Us*, unless, like *them*, we govern them also by the Rules of Reason and Religion. *Be ye Angry and Sin not. Now unto the only wise God, &c.*

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DOM 2252

S E R M O N VII.

Preach'd in the

Parish Church of St *James's Westminster*, December 16, 1720, being the Day of *Fasting and Humiliation*, for beseeching God to preserve us from the *Plague*.

ISAIAH xxvi. 9. latter Part.

When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.

BESIDES the general Evidences of the Being and Providence of God which appear in the Fabrick of the Universe, in the Contrivance and wise Disposition of all the Works of Nature, and in the great Providential Events which to the several Nations of the Earth declare in some Degree his Government over Mankind: I say, Besides these general Evidences of Providence, the Scripture has moreover given us a *particular* and standing Example of it, in the History of the *Jewish Nation*. *That People*, in a *singular* Manner, did God deliver out of the *Egyptian Bondage*, by Signs and Wonders
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and mighty Works. *Them* did he lead thro' the Wilderness like a Flock of Sheep, and with an outstretched Arm brought them through innumerable Dangers to the Borders of his promised Land. Before *them* did he drive out many potent People, and planted them in the room of those idolatrous Nations. Upon *them*, when they corrupted themselves and departed from his Ways, did he frequently inflict very severe Judgments, by Way of exemplary Correction; raising them up new Enemies round about them: And when they returned unto him again, he forgave their Misdeeds, and destroyed them not, but delivered them again out of the Hands of their Enemies. The *Effects* these various Dispensations of Providence had upon *particular Persons* among that People, were very different according to the Temper and Disposition of the Persons. Those of them, who were very corrupt; who loved the idolatrous Rites of the Nations that surrounded them, and the Debaucheries that attended those idolatrous Practices; became more and more corrupt in the Times of *Prosperity*, and in the Days of *Adversity* they hardened their Hearts against God. When the *wrath of God* came upon *them*, and *slew the wealthiest of them*, and *smote down the chosen Men that were in Israel*: For all this they sinned yet more, and believed not his wondrous Works, Psalm lxxviii. 32. And when God worked for them miraculous *Deliverances*, still they kept not the Covenant of God, and would not walk in his Law: But forgot what he had done, and the wonderful Works that he had shewed for them, Ver. 12. The mighty Signs and Wonders they continually saw, grew familiar unto them; and by Degrees made no more Impression upon them, than the Works of Nature, which are in-

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deed continual Miracles, make now upon Atheistical and profane Minds. But *others* amongst them, observed the Works of God, and the Dispensations of his Providence, and laid up all these Things in their Minds; and were influenced thereby to obey his Commandments, and to serve him with an upright Heart. And *some*, who in the Days of Prosperity forgot themselves, and were carried away with the Stream of a degenerate and corrupt World; yet, when the Judgments of God appeared, their Heart was tender, and their Conscience smote them, and they returned and repented of their evil Ways, and amended their Lives and gave glory to God, *Ver. 5. He bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty City he layeth it low, even to the Ground, he bringeth it even to the Dust.*—In the Way of thy Judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the Desire of our Soul is to thy Name, and to the Remembrance of thee. With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night, yea, with my Spirit within me will I seek thee early. For when thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.

THE Doctrinal Proposition plainly contained in the Words, and which will therefore be the Subject of the following Discourse, is this: That the Design and the proper Effect of the Judgments of God in this World, is to awaken Sinners, and to bring them by Repentance to the Practice of Righteousness. *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitant of the World will learn Righteousness.*

RIGHTEOUSNESS is the Practice of that which is in itself Right and Fit to be done. And, were there no Rewards or Punishments annexed either by God or Man, other than what essentially arise

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from the good or evil Actions themselves; yet that which is Right, would still always be reasonable to be done; and the Nature of Wickedness would be still always what it is. Upon this Ground it is, that God who is infinitely above all Hope or Fear; to whose Happiness nothing can be added, and nothing diminished from it, yet essentially loves Righteousness and Truth, and steddily and unalterably chooses always to do what is Just and Good. *Inferiour rational Beings, so far as they are influenced by Reason, do the same; and see, and esteem, and judge of Things, as they really are. But all finite Beings are, in their several Proportions and Degrees, fallible. And the Reason which is in Men, is Weak; liable to be darkened by Ignorance, to be blinded by Prejudices, to be seduced by Appetites, to be over-ruled by Passions and unreasonable Affections. These are the Springs of Wickedness among Men. To prevent the ill Effects whereof God has been pleased to add Weight on the Side of Virtue and Righteousness, by the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments. The Rewards which God has annexed to the Practice of Virtue, either in this Life or the next, are of such a Nature; that the having Regard to those Rewards, does not destroy the intrinsic Excellency of Virtue, or make the Practice of it at all mercenary; because, the Idea of God being the Notion of a Being infinitely Holy, Righteous and Good; the Love of him, and the Desire of continuing in his Favour and of being Blessed by him, is either in effect the same Thing, or at least is co-incident with, the Love of Virtue and Goodness itself. Punishments likewise, when consider'd as coming from God, are of such a Nature, that good Actions arising from the Fear of his Displeasure,*

do not lose the Nature of *true Virtue*; Because, God being infinitely removed from all possibility of Error, Arbitrariness, or any evil Disposition whatsoever; Men cannot possibly by the Fear or Sense of *his Anger*, be excited or moved to do any Action, but what at the same Time they must of necessity be convinced in their own Minds, is Fit and Right and Reasonable for them to do. And Punishments inflicted by *Men*; were they always faithfully and righteously applied, that is, were they never, except in Cases of necessary *Self-Defence*, made use of to any other Purpose, than upon the Foundation of the acknowledged Difference between Good and Evil, to *compel* Men to do what they themselves well know is their *Duty* to do; were this (I say) constantly the Case, Punishment from *Men* would then be of the same Nature, and have proportionably the same Effect, as Punishment from the Hand of *Providence*. But the Errors and Passions of Mankind, having too frequently brought great Confusion into *their* Manner of dealing with each other; the right Use therefore and Application of Men's *Hopes* and *Fears* to the Purposes of Religion, is to turn them towards their most proper Object, the *Favour* or *Displeasure* of God. Now *Fear* being the *stronger* and more powerful Affection, than Hope; hence the *Judgments* of God, either *seen* or *felt*, either inflicted upon *ourselves*, or observed on *others*, are apt to work upon Men more effectually to bring them to Repentance, than the Observation of numerous Instances of the Divine Mercy and Goodness. In the Words immediately following my Text, and as a Confirmation of the Truth of the Proposition therein contained, that *When God's JUDGMENTS are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will*

learn Righteousness; In confirmation of this Truth, let FAVOUR (says the Prophet) *be shown to the Wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness*; in the Land of uprightness will be deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord: Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they SHALL see, and be ashamed: The Terroures of the Lord will force them to see, and they shall be ashamed. The Greatest of all the Temporal Terroures of the Lord, is Death: Death, which puts an End to all worldly Considerations, and consigns Men over to an unalterable Eternity. When this Messenger of the Divine Judicature apparently approaches; there is no Man so void of Sense, as not to begin *then at least* to be seriously solicitous, what the Event of that Judgment will be, to which he perceives himself going without Delay. The Reason why he should be thus solicitous, is the same at all other Times. For near or far off, still Death is equally certain; and after that, the Judgment. And how distant soever Death may at any Time seem to be from any particular Person, yet, even at that greatest seeming Distance, it must of Necessity be very near, it may be nearer than can be conceived. But Men are careless and stupid; and the Heat of Passions corrupts their Sense, the Deceitfulness of Riches blinds their Eyes, the Pleasures of Life steal from them their Understandings; and they willingly suffer the thinnest Mist to hide from them the clearest Light, and the meanest Trifle to divert them from the Thoughts of their eternal Interest. This is the Lethargy which in Time of Health and Prosperity, is apt to stifle the general Notices which God has given Men of himself in the standing Use both of Reason and Revelation. To awaken Men therefore from this

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this State of Insensibility, God is pleased sometimes to strengthen these general Notices, by more particular and more immediately affecting Warnings; by Threatnings of impending Judgments upon ourselves, or by Examples of his inflicting them upon others. By these, he excites Men's Consideration and Attention, quells the Eagerness of ungoverned Passions, and lays open to them the Folly of Ambition and Covetousness. By these, as 'tis elegantly expressed in the Book of Job, *ch. xxxiii. 16. by These he openeth the Ears of Men, and sealeth their Instruction; That he may withdraw Man from his Purpose, and bide Pride from Man. And ch. xxxvi. 8. If they be bound in Fetters, and held in Cords of Affliction; then God sheweth them their Work, and their Transgression, that they have exceeded: He openeth also their Ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from their Iniquity.* All temporal Judgments therefore whatsoever, are properly of a medicinal Nature, and mercifully intended for our Benefit: All of them without Exception, for the Benefit of such as shall take Warning from them in others; and all those of them which are short of Death, for the Benefit even of the Persons themselves on whom they fall. *It is good for me, says the Psalmist, that I have been afflicted: For, before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have learnt thy Precepts.* The gentle Admonitions of Afflictions sent upon particular Persons, are the still Voice of the divine Patience, calling Sinners to Repentance: And the severest Calamities even of publick and national Desolations, Fire and Sword, Dearth and Famines, Plagues and Pestilences, are yet of the same Nature; being the louder Calls, and as it were the Thunder of the Almighty's Threatnings, necessary sometimes, and

even *these* not always sufficient, to rowse up the Senses of a hard and stupid, of a vicious and debauched World. 'Tis *no Pleasure* to the Almighty, to grieve the Children of Men: And 'tis with the highest Eloquence of *affectionate* Expressions, that the Scripture constantly sets forth to us, how *unwilling* God is to execute his severer Threatnings, how *ready* always to remove his Judgments upon Men's true Repentance; and how he *searches* as it were for *every* Argument, and *every* Motive of Compassion: *Shall I not spare Niniveh, that great City, wherein are more than six-score thousand Persons, that know not their right Hand from their left?* Nay, *shall I not spare Sodom*, does the Scripture represent him saying within himself; *shall I not spare it for the sake of ten Righteous*, if so many can be found therein? But that the *severest* of the divine Judgments, are sometimes *absolutely necessary*; and that the Corruption of the World, were it to be always in a *continued* and *uninterrupted* Prosperity, would be *altogether Intolerable*; is apparent from hence, that even *these Judgments themselves*, seen inflicted upon *others*, nay even *felt* inflicted upon Men's *selves*, even *These* very frequently prove *ineffectual*. How often, when we see great Calamities befall our Neighbours; instead of being warned thereby to amend our *own* Lives, do we turn it only into an Occasion of Uncharitableness in censuring *others*! Which Spirit, is very affectionately reprov'd by our Saviour, Luke xiii. 2. *Suppose ye that these Galilæans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices, were Sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such Things?* I tell you, *no*; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them; think ye

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that they were Sinners above all Men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Nay, how frequently do the severest of God's Judgments inflicted upon a Nation or People; the last and loudest Call to Repentance, after which there remains no Remedy against final Ex-cision; how often do *These* prove ineffectual, to awa-ken even those very Persons upon whom they are in-flicted; and leave them in an incorrigible impenitency, hardened to Destruction! Thus of King *Abaz* we find it recorded, 2 Cbr. xxviii. 22. that in the Time of his Distress, he trespassed yet more against the Lord: This is that King Ahaz. And of the whole People of Israel, in a most eloquent Complaint by the Prophet Amos. ch. iv. 6; I have given you Want of Bread in all your Cities;——I have smitten you with Blast-ing and Mildew, when your Gardens and your Vine-yards the Palmer-worm devoured; yet have ye not re-turned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the Pestilence after the Manner of Egypt, and your young Men have I slain with the Sword; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have over-thrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Go-morrhah, and ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. In like Manner in the new Testament, speak-ing of the Punishment of the Nations in the latter-days, which call themselves Christians; Rev. ix. 20, 21. The rest of the Men which were not killed by these Plagues, yet repented not——of their Murders, nor of their * Sorceries, nor of their Fornication, nor of their Thefts: Of their Sorceries; that is, of all their su-perstitious Methods of making Men fancy themselves

* φαρμακων.

to be religious, by what *others* can do for or to them, or by what *they* can do for *themselves*, without the Practice of Righteousness and true Virtue. And *ch. xvi. 9. Men were scorched with great Heat, and blasphemed the Name of God who hath Power over these Plagues; and they repented not, to give him Glory;—But blasphemed the God of Heaven, because of their Pains,—and repented not of their Deeds. In this Passage; (Men repented not, to give him Glory;)* 'tis worthy of Observation, by the Way, wherein consists the true and Scripture-Notion of the *Glory of God*. It consists in reasonable Creatures living, (under a due and constant Sense of the Divine Government,) according to the Rules of Reason, of everlasting Righteousness, Goodness and Truth. And *Sinners* have no other possible Way of giving *Glory to God*, but by repenting of their evil Deeds; that is, amending their Lives, obeying *the everlasting Gospel*, and forsaking those Vices which are opposite to God's Kingdom of Virtue and Righteousness. Which Observation may be of good Use, for preventing many wrong Notions concerning the Nature of true Religion, and of the *Glory of God*. But to proceed. The Reason why the Judgments, the severest and most awakening Judgments of God, even those which cannot fail to convince Men of the Transitoriness and Uncertainty, and Vanity of every Thing here below; do yet nevertheless very often prove *ineffectual* to cause Sinners *thus to give Glory to God*, by bringing them to true Repentance; the Reason (I say) why even *these* Judgments often fail of this Effect, is a confused, uncertain, inattentive sort of Infidelity; which, ascribing all Calamities to *second Causes*, and lamenting them only as unavoidable *natural Disasters*, looks

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not up to the Hand of the *first* Cause, which steers and directs the whole Course of Nature. *Wars* and *Desolations*, we see arise from the Passions of Men. *Famines*, are owing to Accidents of Wind and Weather. *Plagues* and *Pestilences*, those great destroying Angels, possibly *are* or however *may be imagined to be*, Vapours and Steams out of the Earth. And, because the Grounds of these Things appear in *Nature*; therefore weak and foolish Men, intent upon the *Weapon* only, and not upon *him who strikes* with it, regard not to give Glory to the *God* of Nature. Whereas in Truth and Reality, *NATURE* is nothing but an empty Word; and the *Course of Nature* (as 'tis vulgarly called,) excepting only the Operations of free Agents, is merely an *abstract Notion* or Expression of the *regularity* of *his* Operations, who made and governs all Things. Even the Counsels and Designs of *Men*, are, by Incidents unforeseen to *them*, perpetually over-ruled to quite different Events, than *they* intended or could possibly imagine. But as to *UNINTELLIGENT Natural Causes*; whatever *they* seem to effect, is not in reality done by *them* at all, but by the Providence of God. That the *Sun runs* its course *every Day*, is no less strictly and properly the Hand of God, than that it *stood still* one Day. Nor is there any other Reason, why *supernatural Miracles* are by all Men readily ascribed to God, when the equally great *Miracles of Nature* are vulgarly fancied to be done without him; for this (I say) there is no other than this one foolish Reason, that what God does *once*, Men see and acknowledge is done by *him*; but what he does *always*, they therefore think 'tis not *he* does it *at all*. The Scripture (and Reason also) teaches us more justly, to *acknowledge*

ledge God in all our Ways. That 'tis he, who causes HIS Sun to rise, and sends us Rain and fruitful Seasons. That 'tis he, who (in the Psalmist's Expression) maketh the Grass to grow upon the Mountains; giving even to the BEAST his Food, and to the young Ravens which call upon him. That, without him, not a Sparrow falls to the Ground, but even the very Hairs of our Head are all numbred. That 'tis he alone, who gives us richly all Things to enjoy; even all those Things, which in a vulgar and careless Way of speaking, we usually ascribe to natural and inanimate Causes. Which very same Causes, whensoever he pleases, he can make to be the Instruments of our Punishment, as well as of our Support. He can (as Moses elegantly expresses it;) Make the Heavens over our Heads, to be Bras; and the Earth under our Feet, Iron. He can punish with the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, and with the Sicknes that destroyeth at the Noon-Day. He can scorch with Drought, or drown with Moisture, or blast with unwholsome Winds; in order to destroy with Famine, and make a fruitful Land barren, for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein. Or, without removing the Blessings themselves of Nature, he can at any Time withdraw the Benefit and the Effects of them. When God with Rebukes doth chasten Man for Sin, he maketh his Beauty to consume away, as it were a Moth fretting a Garment, Psalm xxxix. 11. So that, besides God's more visible Judgments upon a Nation or People, they will sometimes by a secret Curse insensibly decay in their Riches and their Strength. They will, they know not how, be strangely impoverished in the very midst of Plenty, and weakened even by the greatest Successes; while they see not by what silent

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Steps and imperceptible degrees (like *grey Hairs* and the *Infirmities* of old Age) Poverty and Weakness steal in upon them. By these various Methods, does the divine Patience awaken and call Men to Repentance. After which, if (in the Prophet's Expression) *the People turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither will they seek the Lord of Hosts*: If, when thou hast stricken them, they have not grieved; when thou hast consumed them, they have refused to receive Correction, they have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refused to return: there then remains nothing, but that severest of all temporal Threatnings, *Jer. ii. 19. Thine OWN WICKEDNESS shall correct thee, and thy Backslidings shall reprove thee.* Thus did God deal with the antient Jews, *Psalms lxxxi. 11. My People would not hearken unto my Voice, and Israel would not obey me: So I gave them up unto their own Hearts Lusts, and let them follow their own Imaginations*: And with the same People in our Saviour's Time, *Matt. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! Behold, your House is left unto you desolate.*

It cannot be doubted but your Thoughts have already all along prevented me, in applying what has been said unto ourselves; for whose Admonition these Things are written, and they were intended for Examples unto Us, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. There is no Nation upon Earth, that has had greater Experience of the divine Goodness, than we have had. We have long enjoyed the inestimable Blessing of a free and legal Government, while other Nations

Nations have groaned under the Violence of arbitrary Oppressions. We have had the free Use of our Reason and of the *Holy Scriptures* allowed us, which under other Governments, that yet call themselves *Christian*, have, for many Ages together, been persecuted even unto Death. We have enjoyed all the Plenty and Happiness of *Peace*, even in the midst of the most vigorous and bloody Wars: While the Sword and Fire have consumed round about us, and other fruitful Countries have been ravaged and destroyed: While *thousands have fallen beside us, and ten thousands at our right Hand*, and yet Providence has protected us, that *it came not nigh Us*: While Want and Famine spread Desolation among our Neighbours, and Pestilence at a Distance threatned still severer Judgments of God. What *Returns* we have made to the divine Goodness for these *Lengthenings of our Tranquillity*, appears too sadly in that Impiety and Profaneness, that Looseness and Debauchery, that Iniquity and Uncharitableness, that unrighteous and irreligious Spirit of Heat, Violence and Factionness, which still abounds amongst us. For these Things God has at several Times visited this Nation, with some sharp Remembrances of his Displeasure, and has at other Times threatned us with very near Approaches, of a more lasting and destructive Wrath. The Sword of his destroying Angel, is *at this Day* unsheathed before us; and how far his Commission may extend, God only knows. The *only certain* Way of deprecating God's Wrath effectually, is to bring forth beforehand those Fruits meet for Repentance, to which all the divine Judgments, that are not finally destructive, are intended to excite us. The *first* Thing is, that every *private* Person would for

for himself seriously examine, and amend (as *Solomon* expresses it, in that solemn Prayer of his, *1 Kings* viii. 38.) every Man the Plague of his own Heart ; that is, reform his private and personal Faults, whatever they be. In the next Place, with Regard to the Publick : Since God has been pleased to continue to us the Knowledge of the Gospel, in a more free and unrestrained Use of the Scriptures than most other Nations enjoy ; it behoves us, (lest we provoke God to remove our Candlestick out of its Place,) to take due and constant Care that we bring every Thing impartially to the Test of that sacred Rule ; and that in our Practice we continually so behave ourselves, as becomes those who have always before their Eyes the uncorrupted Doctrine and Precepts of Christ. And since in the Civil Government likewise, it has hitherto pleased God, by many even miraculous Events, to continue to us our Laws and Liberties ; it imports us, (as we would not draw down upon our Heads, that greatest of all the temporal Plagues of God, arbitrary Power ;) it imports us, every Man in his Station, to the utmost of his Ability, to support and maintain a Government so constituted. That the People, under the uniform and steady Protection of wise and equitable Laws, may serve God quietly and with religious Fear. And that the King may rejoice in thy Strength, O Lord, and be exceeding glad of thy Salvation: That thou mayest give him his Hearts Desire, and not deny him the Request of his Lips : That thou mayest prevent him with the Blessings of Goodness, and make his Honour great in thy Salvation, and crown him with Glory and great Worship : That thou may'st give him a long Life here, and a longer and happier hereafter, even for ever and ever.

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SERMON VIII.

Preach'd in the

Parish-Church of St James's Westminster, December 8, 1721, being the Day of Fasting and Humiliation, for beseeching God to preserve us from the Plague.

LUKE xiii. 2, 3.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were Sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

TIS the natural Voice and Judgment of Reason, in which all Men who have any Sense of God upon their Mind, in all Nations and in all Ages, have agreed; that the Miseries and Calamities which befall Mankind, are all of them the *Effects* and *Consequences* of *Sin*. Considering the essential Goodness of God, who cannot take Pleasure in the needless Afflictions of his Creatures; this Notion, in general, cannot but be right. And, were

there no other State but this ; were this World the whole of God's creation, and took in the whole Period of our Being ; it could not but be moreover true *in particular*, that the *Proportion* of Misery which befalls every single Person, would be exactly correspondent to his Crimes. But *here*, there comes in a very great Variety of *different* Considerations. The present State being a Time of *Tryal*, and not of *Retribution* ; there hence arise many wise Reasons, why God sometimes permits the greatest of Afflictions to fall upon the best of Men, and sometimes suffers the wickedest of Men to go on in an uninterrupted Course of Prosperity ; and, in the Execution of temporal Judgments, very frequently involves the righteous in the same Calamities which he sends upon the ungodly. The only Use therefore that *can* be made, and which Providence intends should be made, of the divine Judgments here upon Earth ; is to convince us of the Evil of Sin in general, to awaken us from a careless and inconsiderate Temper, to wean us from too great a Fondness for the uncertain Enjoyments of this present Life ; and to put us continually upon mending *our own* Manners, and improving *ourselves* more and more in the Practice of Virtue ; and not at all to enable us to judge concerning *others*, before the great Day of Account, what *their* State and Condition is, with Regard to the final Favour or Displeasure of God. This is a Matter of Curiosity, which concerns not *us* to know ; and every Judgment we attempt to make concerning it, has, in the present State of Things, even a proper and natural Tendency to deceive us. Every *private* Person, in this Way of judging, whenever he compares himself with others ; 'tis odds but, according as his natural Temper be, whether Melancholy,

choly, or Presumptuous; he determines either *uncharitably* of others, or with unreasonable *Despondency* of himself; from Dispensations of Providence, which neither to *him* nor *them* are at all the proper Rule of judging in that Matter. But *publick* Bodies of Men; Nations, Sects, or Parties; whenever *they* take upon them to judge of each other in this Method, they hardly ever fail to err on the *presumptuous* Side; and to turn every Judgment of God, which falls upon Men of *other* Denominations, into an Argument of Pride and Favour towards *themselves*. This is what our Saviour, in the Text, warns us against, *Suppose ye*, says he, *that those Galilæans*, who fell by *Pilate's* Cruelty in so extraordinary a Manner, as that their *own Blood* was mingled with the Blood of their *Sacrifices*; suppose ye that these Men were Sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. The Persons who told our Lord of this extraordinary Calamity, *ver. 1.* seem to have done it with an Expectation of Curiosity, to see what Observations our Lord would make concerning the Behaviour and Circumstances and State of those Men towards God, upon whom this particular Misfortune fell. But he in *this*, according to his constant Method in all *other* Cases, disappointed their unprofitable inquisitiveness; and, instead of satisfying them about *other* Men's Affairs, turns their Question into an Occasion of making some useful Application to *themselves*: I tell you, says he, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.

IN discoursing upon which Words, it may be useful for us to observe: 1st. Our Saviour's general Manner; that, whenever Men proposed to him any curi-

ous Question, or related to him any particular Fact or Event, in Expectation of hearing his Observations upon it; he constantly turned the Matter before him, into an Occasion of giving some *practical* Instruction, to the Persons *themselves* with whom he was conversing. And 2^{dly}, The *particular* Doctrine contained in these Words: That, though all God's temporal Judgments are inflicted upon account of Sin, yet they are not proportionable to the Degrees of Men's Demerits; and that therefore the proper Use to be made of them, is, never from thence to form any uncharitable Judgment concerning *others*, but to infer *for ourselves* the Necessity of Repentance.

1st, NOTHING is more remarkable in the whole History of the Gospel, than our Saviour's *general* Method: That, whenever Men proposed to him any curious Question, or related to him any particular Fact or Event, in Expectation of hearing his Observations upon it; he constantly turned the Matter before him, into an Occasion of giving some *practical* Instruction to the Persons *themselves* with whom he was conversing. He passes no Judgment upon those unhappy *Galileans*, whose extraordinary Misfortune was now reported to him. He makes no Observation upon the Characters of the Persons, nor gives any Hint of the peculiar Reasons for which Providence thus distinguished them from the Bulk of Sinners. But (what was of much more Use to the Persons who made the Enquiry, and to all Christians in general, for whose Instruction our Lord's Reply is recorded in the Gospel;) he hence takes Occasion to inculcate upon *all* Sinners, the Necessity of Repentance and Amendment of Life, in order to escape God's final Wrath. And this was his constant Method, upon
all

all other Occasions. When one asked him, *ver. 23.* of this Chapter, *Lord, are there Few that be saved?* instead of satisfying the Person's Curiosity, he exhorts both him that asks the Question, and as many others as were present, to take Care that *they themselves* be found in the Number, *whatever* that Number be. *Strive ye to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the House is risen up, and hath shut to the Door, and ye begin to stand without, and to say, Lord,—we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets; he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity.* Again: When his Disciples asked him, *Matt. xviii. 1.* *Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?* Instead of naming, according to their Expectation, some among themselves, who had conversed with him most intimately here upon Earth; (which Expectation showed forth itself particularly in the Request of the Mother of Zebedees Children, that *one of her Sons* might sit on his right Hand, and the other on his left in his Kingdom :) Instead of this, I say, he tells them *which* was the *only Way* whereby they could attain to the Kingdom of Heaven *at all.* Setting a little Child in the midst of them, he said, *Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* In like Manner, when the Disciples asked him, *Matt. xxiv. 3.* *When shall these Things be? And what shall be the Sign of thy coming, and of the End of the World?* the

Sum

Sum of his Answer is: * *Watch ye, and be ye ready; for in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.* And, † *take heed to yourselves, lest at any Time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness and Cares of this Life; and so that Day come upon you unawares.* For as a Snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth. *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these Things, and to stand before the Son of Man.* And the same Turn that he thus always gave to curious Questions put to him, the same he likewise constantly gave to incidental Things said to him, or to particular *Facts and Events* taken Notice of in his Presence. When one prefaced a Question he was about to propose to him, with that respectful Title and Mark of Esteem, *good Master*, he thence takes Occasion, even from so seemingly small a Handle, to instruct a Person in that great and prime Foundation of all Religion, that *God and God only*, is perfectly and essentially good. § *Why callest thou me, good? There is none good, but one: that is, God.* Again, when *Martha* cumbred with much serving, complained to him, || *Lord, dost thou not care that my Sister hath left me to serve alone?* instead of speaking to her Sister to come and help her, he takes a gentle Occasion from her own Complaint, to remind her of a more important Piece of Service: *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things; but one Thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken from her.* At another Time, when one of the Company he was discoursing to, desired him to speak to his Brother to di-

* Matt. xxiv. 42, 44. † Luke xxi. 44. § Matt. xix. 17. || Luke x. 40, 42.

wide

*vide the Inheritance with him ; instead of making himself a Judge and Divider between them, he chose rather to take that Occasion to preach to them all against Covetousness : * Take heed and beware of Covetousness ; for a Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesses.* In another Place, when a Person in the Company to whom he was preaching, astonished at the Excellency of his Doctrine, cried out, *Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast sucked,* Luke xi. 27. immediately he turns their Thoughts from the Admiration of himself, to that which would most effectually be profitable to them : *Yea rather, says he, Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* Upon another Occasion, when his Disciples *prayed him to eat,* John iv. 31. He lets not even that Opportunity slip, of reminding them how, to a rational and well-disposed Mind, there is no Pleasure so great, as that of doing what is right : *I have meat, says he, to eat, that ye know not of ;—My Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work.* 'Twould be repeating the *whole* Gospel, the *whole* History of our Saviour's Life ; to mention *all* the Instances of his turning *every Incident* that came before him, into Matter of Instruction and Admonition to those with whom he conversed. When some of the Pharisees advised him to *retire* out of the Reach of Herod, who, they informed him, had a Design to *kill* him, Luke xiii. 31. Instead of being drawn, as probably *they* expected, by that seeming friendly and officious Advice, to enter with them into the *Character* of Herod and *his* Government ; he, in a very extraordinary and yet most natural Manner turns his Answer into

* Luke xii. 15.

a *severe*

a severe Reproof of their own Incurribleness, and into an Occasion of giving them *Warning*, how near the *final Wrath* of God was impending upon them: *It cannot be*, says he, *that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as a Hen doth gather her Brood under her Wings, and ye would not! Behold, your House is left unto you desolate.* In like Manner, when his Disciples, as they were going out of the Temple, observed to him, *Master, see what Manner of Stones, and what Buildings are here*, Mark xiii. 1. Instead of adding, as they seemed to expect, *his own Observations* concerning the *Sumptuousness* and *Magnificence* of the Building, and the *Grandeur* and *Riches* of the Builder; he on the contrary turns their Thoughts from *these Considerations*, to the view of that *final Destruction* which God intended to bring upon the whole Nation, for their continued Perverseness and Disobedience: *Seest thou* (says he to the Person who desired him to take Notice of the Stateliness of the Fabrick; *Seest thou*) *these great Buildings? There shall not be left one Stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* And thus likewise, in the Words of the Text: *When some that were present, told him of the Galilæans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices; he did not, (as they, who mentioned this Matter to him, seemed to expect; he did not) hereupon enter into a Discourse concerning either the Cruelty of Pilate who murdered these Galilæans, or his Impiety and Profaneness in murdering them at the Place and Time of God's publick Worship, or concerning the unhappiness of the Persons themselves who perished by so particular*
a Mis-

4 *Misfortune, or concerning the peculiar Reasons why the divine Providence thought fit to distinguish these particular Persons by a singular Judgment: But, instead of all this, he immediately makes the Application to his Auditors then present, and to the Persons themselves who told him of the Fact; warning them of the indispensable Necessity of effectual Repentance and Amendment of Life as the only possible Means by which they themselves could escape God's final Vengeance. Suppose ye (says he) that these Galilæans were Sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or these eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

2dly, HAVING thus at large set forth to you our Sayiour's general Method; that whenever Men proposed to him any curious Question, or related to him any particular Fact or Event; in Expectation of hearing his Observations upon it; he constantly turned the Matter before him, into an Occasion of giving some practical Instruction, to the Persons themselves with whom he was conversing: It remains now in the second Place, that I proceed to consider the particular Doctrine, expressed in the Words of the Text; that, though all God's temporal Judgments are inflicted upon Account of Sin, yet they are not proportionable to the Degrees of Men's Demerits; and that, therefore, the proper Use to be made of them, is never from thence to form any uncharitable Judgment concerning others, but to infer for ourselves the Necessity of Repentance. That all the temporal

Judgments

Judgments God at any Time inflicts upon Mankind, are on the Account of *Sin*, cannot indeed possibly be denied; because 'tis on the Account of *Sin*, that Men are at all placed in this State of *Misery* and *Mortality*. Had *Sin* never entered into the World, Man had never been excluded out of *Paradise*, and from the *Tree of Life*; which was, either literally or figuratively, a Means or an Emblem of Immortality and Happiness. And at last, when *Transgression* shall be finished, and, an End made of *Sin*; the Fruit of the *Tree of Life* (as the Prophetick Language expresses it) shall be again restored, and the *Leaves of the Tree* shall be for the *Healing of the Nations*. To *Sin* therefore in general, 'tis evident, all the Miseries of this mortal State are wholly owing. Nevertheless, since this present State is not a State of *Retribution* in particular, but only such a State of *Trial* or *Probation*, as God, in Consequence of *Sin*'s entring into the World, thought fit to appoint Men to undergo; a State, in which the Righteous and the Wicked, without a perpetual miraculous Interposition, cannot but be frequently involved in the same Calamities together; a State, in which the best and most innocent Persons very often suffer, even the most grievously, by and from the Wicked; a State, wherein God himself sometimes thinks fit, by Afflictions of his own more immediate appointing, (by Winds and Storms, by Floods and general Devastations, by Famines, Pestilences, and the like universal Calamities, which fall upon all promiscuously,) to try the Faith and Patience and Resignation of his Servants; and in which State we can never judge with any Certainty, whether even those who are the most suddenly cut off, are cut off in Judgment or in Mercy: For these

Reasons,

Reasons, whenever we see any extraordinary Calamity befall any particular *Person*, or any *Body* of Men, or any one *Nation* in particular ; we ought never from thence to form any uncharitable Judgment concerning the State of *others* with Regard to God, but only to infer for *ourselves* the Necessity of Repentance. 'Tis a very natural Piece of Pride, in careless and corrupt Minds, to build an Opinion of their *own* Goodness, upon the *comparative* Badness of *others*, and, in judging of this *comparative* Badness of *others*, to deceive themselves, by founding that Judgment either upon *what others suffer* at the Hand of God, or perhaps upon *what Faults others are guilty of* in one particular Manner, when possibly *they themselves* are in some other Manner guilty of the very same Offences. Thus for Instance, Christians of the reformed Religion condemn, and very justly, those of the Church of Rome, as guilty of the highest Absurdity and Irreligion, who in a continual Circle look upon themselves as absolved from their Sins, which they *confess* to a Priest, and then *return* to their Sins again : And yet among Protestants every one is really guilty of the very same Absurdity and Irreligion, who in a continual Circle looks upon himself as absolved from his Sins, which he *confesses* to God Almighty, and then *returns* to them again. Thus Men are very apt to deceive themselves, in comparing other Men's *Actions* with their *own*. And so they are apt to do also, in comparing their *Sufferings*. A false and deceitful Heart, (especially in Cases where *Bodies* of Men, where *Nations* or *Sects* or *Parties* are concerned,) is very ready to flatter itself with Imaginations of being *itself* more in Favour with God, when the severer Sorts of the divine Judgments inflicted upon *others*, fill it with un-

charitable Suspicions of the *Grounds and Reason* of those Judgments. In some few particular Cases indeed, where the *Judgment* is the immediate *Consequence* and direct *Effect* of the *Sin*; as, where the *Diseases* are the immediate *Produce* of the *Debauchery*; or where either *single Persons* or *whole Nations* do *themselves* greatly *suffer*, in the *very Attempt* of despoiling *others* of their manifest *Right*: In these Cases there is indeed no uncharitableness, in ascribing the *Judgment* to the *Sin*. But much oftner, and indeed *generally speaking*, it arises wholly from Men's *Partiality* towards *themselves*, that they are so ready to throw upon *others* the Causes of the Judgments wherewith God punishes Mankind. Thus of old in the *Heathen Roman Empire*, whenever God was pleased to send among them Plagues or Famines, or Devastations by the Incur-sion of barbarous Nations; the *Christians* immediately, as if *they* were the Causes of the Calamity, were hurried to the Prisons, to the Racks, and to the wild Beasts. 'Tis not easy for Men to see it in *themselves*: But *something* of the *same Spirit* there is in every *wicked Man*, when, instead of being moved by the Judgments of God to examine and amend his *own Heart*, his Eyes are continually searching after the *real* or *imaginary* Faults of *others*. *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth*. But if we would observe our Sa-viour's Direction in the Text, and form our Notions of Things according to *that Rule*; *herein* we could *never be deceived*. The Judgments of God, which we see abroad in the World, are a *proper and continual* Warning to *all Sinners*, to bring them to *Repentance* and *effectual Amendment*: Without which, they must *all finally and inevitably perish*. The *Jews*, to whom

our Saviour gave the Admonition in the Text, did at the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, perish in great Multitudes *literally* by the *very same* Calamity, which had before fallen upon the *Galilæans* here mentioned. And all Sinners in all Ages, who see the Judgments of God fall upon others, ought to consider, that they know not how soon the *very same* Calamities may fall upon themselves. But whether the Punishment overtakes them at all *here*, or no ; it will, without timely and effectual Amendment, certainly overtake them *hereafter*. Which is a *much more terrible* Consideration : For if these Things are done in the green Tree, what shall be done in the dry ? If Judgment begin at the House of God, what shall the End be of them that obey not the Gospel ? If the temporal Calamities which fall upon mixt Multitudes *here*, of the righteous and wicked together, be so dreadful ; what shall the Estate be of those, who shall be punished with EVERLASTING Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Majesty ?

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF LINCOLN'S INN

ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON,

Printed by J. Streater, at the

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S E R M O N IX.

Preach'd in the

Parish-Church of St. *James's Westminster*, April 25, 1723, being the Day appointed by his Majesty for a publick *Thanksgiving* to God for preserving his Majesty and his Subjects from that dreadful *Plague* with which the Kingdom of *France* was lately visited; and for putting an *End* to the same.

M A T T. XXIV. 7.

For Nation shall rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; And there shall be Famines, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes in divers Places.

TH E S E Words are Part of the prophetical Description, which our Saviour gives his Disciples a little before his Death, of the State of Things which should be between that Time and the final Destruction of the *Jewish* Temple and Nation; and, under that Type, the State of the World in general during the larger Period, until his coming

to Judgment. The *principal* Thing, about which he most *distinctly and particularly* admonishes them, is the *Persecutions and Difficulties* they and their Followers must expect to meet with, more or less, in all Ages. *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all Nations for my Names-Sake: And many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another: And because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold:* That is, the general Corruption and Wickedness of the World, shall *discourage* many, and weary them out, and make them lay aside all Thoughts of Religion, and give themselves up to be carried with the Stream of an unrighteous and debauched World. For there shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the Beginning of the World unto this Time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those Days should be shortened, there should no Flesh be saved: (That is, the Truth of Religion, if this State of Things were long to continue, would be totally extinguished among Men, by the Universality of prevailing Corruptions:) But, for the *Elects* sake, those Days shall be shortened. This (I say) is the *principal* particular, upon which our Lord here chiefly enlarges: That, in after Ages, Men might not be surprized, when they should find that the Prince of Peace came not to send Peace upon Earth, but a Sword; and that the Religion of Christ, a Religion of the most perfect Simplicity and Plainness, of the completest and most extensive Charity, should be overrun with universal Confusions and Iniquity. But besides this *principal* and more especial Aim of his Discourse, he intermixes moreover some general Intimations of other Events which should happen in the World; and particularly of the Judgments, where-
with

with the divine Providence would from Time to Time punish the unrighteous Nations of the Earth. *Ye shall bear* (says he) *of Wars, and Rumors of Wars: See that ye be not troubled: For all these Things must come to pass:—For Nation shall rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; and there shall be Famine, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes in divers Places: All these are the Beginnings of Sorrows.*

WITH REGARD to each of these Particulars, viz. the *Persecutions* wherewith good Men should be oppressed by an *unrighteous World*, and the *Judgments* wherewith the divine Providence should at any Time punish the Nations of the Earth; the Advice our Lord gives his Disciples, is, to *PRAY* constantly to God, that he would be pleased either to *prevent* these Things coming upon them, or *lighten* the Burden of them by providential Supports. *Pray ye*, says he, *that your Flight be not in the Winter, neither on the Sabbath-day.* And, *watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these Things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.* Now the same Reason that there is, why we ought at any Time to *PRAY*, that God would either *prevent* or *remove from us* any Calamity; the *very same* Reason there is, to return him our *THANKS* and *PRAISE*, whenever he has been pleased either to *withdraw from us* any such Calamity, or the apparent *Danger* of it. The *Ground* of both, is the *same*; that God, who has Power over all, is the alone Disposer of all Events; and that that Disposition of Mind, which leads Men to apply to him for all the good Things they want, and to make acknowledgment to him for all the Benefits they have received, is one of the principal of those Qualifications which recommend
Men

Men to the Divine Favour, and to the more immediate Care and Protection of his good Providence. The Meaning of which is, that not even the *best of Men* can have any certain Security that they shall escape the Calamities of this present Life; nay, in some Cases, as in that of Persecution particularly, they are *for that very Reason* the *most* exposed, because they are the *best Men*: But the Meaning is, that God who *created the material World* for the Sake of the *moral One*, and *governs the former* always with a View to the latter; (for the unintelligent *material World*, how exquisite soever the Fabrick of it be, is *nothing at all* any otherwise, than as it has Relation to *Intelligent and Rational Beings* that inhabit it :) God, I say, who *created the material World* merely for the Sake of the *moral one*, and *governs the former* always with a View to the latter, will certainly make *all Things* (sooner or later *work together for good to them that love him*, Rom. viii. 28. Even the *severest Judgments* that he ever sends upon the World, and which to *incorrigible Sinners* are the Messengers of *Destruction*; even *these*, to well-disposed Minds, are either at a distance *Warnings and Admonitions* to amend: Or they are *Chastisements* inflicted for their *Correction*; which, though at present they cannot but *grievous*, yet *afterwards they yield the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*: Or they are *Trials of Men's Faith and Patience*; *which being much more precious than of Gold that perishes, though it be tried with Fire, will be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*: Or, sometimes, they are *Means of taking away the Righteous from greater*

greater Evils to come ; so that though they seem to be punished for a little while, yet is their Hope full of Immortality : Or, however it be, still (as the Apostle expresses it) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished : And the righteous have always this Security, that God is Faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able ; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. Nevertheless, since God only knows the Events of Things, and no Man can be sure of his own Strength ; therefore Reason teaches, and our Lord expressly directs us, to Pray, that we may not be led into Temptation. And for the same Reason, 'tis our Duty to be thankful whenever Providence has prevented any Temptation from coming upon us. And the Case is the same, with Regard to every Sort of Affliction or Calamity in Life. God is able, and will certainly cause all these Things to work together for good, to those who are truly and sincerely Religious. Yet, sensible of our own Unworthiness ; and knowing that these Things are also sometimes Messengers of Wrath, and Instruments of Destruction ; 'tis therefore our Duty to pray continually for the Averting of them, and to return Thanks for every Escape of Danger from them, and to be always ready to make a religious Use either of their being inflicted or prevented. See that ye be not troubled, says our Lord ; for all these Things MUST come to pass :—For Nation shall rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom ; and there shall be Famines, and Pestilences, and Earth-quakes in divers Places.

THE Particulars of this Prophecy of our Lord, we have seen *literally* and *remarkably* fulfilled in our own Days: And yet God has been graciously pleased, not to suffer *any one* of these Calamities to come nigh our Dwellings. We have seen *Nation rise up against Nation*, and *Kingdom against Kingdom*: We have seen *Fire and Sword* consume round about us, and many fruitful Countries ravaged and destroyed; yet at the same Time, we have sat every Man *under his Vine and under his Fig-Tree*; injoying all the Blessings and Happiness of *Peace*, even in the midst of the most bloody and destructive *Wars*. We have seen *Want and Famine* spread Desolation over different Countries, whilst we have been even luxurious in the abundance of overflowing *Plenty*. We have known populous and flourishing Towns, overthrown in one Day with a Storm and *Earthquake*; while our Habitation has been, as the Scripture speaks, the *Munition of Rocks*: So that the Psalmist's Ground of Praise, (Psalm cxxv. 2. *As the Hills stand about Jerusalem, even so standeth the Lord round about his People*) may very properly be applied to US: As the *Seas encompass our Land*, may we no less justly say, even so has the Protection of *Providence* surrounded us on every *side*. Lastly, (which is the more immediate and particular Occasion of our meeting together at this Time to return Thanks to God;) we have seen *that destroying Angel*, the *Pestilence*, executing in particular Places the unsearchable Judgments of God; but holding forth to US this Terror, at a remote Distance only; to admonish and warn us, (*not to imagine that those particular Persons, upon whom this divine Judgment fell, were Sinners above all Men that dwell on the Earth*; but that we might take Notice,) that, unless

we repent, we shall all likewise perish. This is the proper End and Design of all God's temporal Judgments; to warn Men to amend: And the only valuable Expression of *Thankfulness*, for his having at any Time averted from us impending Dangers; is our being thereby led to a more careful Obedience. There is no where in the whole New Testament a severer Character given of incorrigible Sinners, than in those Passages where they are described as not only overlooking all the general Works of Nature and Providence, but as continuing moreover unmoved even at the most exemplary Expressions of the divine Wrath, and unthankfully insensible even of the most remarkable Deliverances. Rev. ix. 20. xvi. 9. *The rest of the Men which were not killed by these Plagues, yet repented not of the works of their Hands; but blasphemed the Name of God which has power over these Plagues, and repented not to give him Glory.* To give Glory to God, is, to make publick Acknowledgment of our Sense of God's continually governing the world in Wisdom and Righteousness; to profess our constant Dependence upon him, for all the good Things we hope for in the Course of Nature which he has appointed, and under the Direction of his allwise Providence; to return him Thanks for all the Benefits we at any Time receive, and for every Escape or Deliverance vouchsafed us from impending Dangers; and to testify the Sincerity of these Acknowledgments, by our Obedience to him in the course of a virtuous and religious Life; that others likewise, seeing our good Works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven, and promote his Kingdom, which is the practise of Virtue and Righteousness in the World.

THE *Things*, for which it is our Duty always to return Thanks to God, are, in general, every good Thing we enjoy: *Life, Health, Peace, Plenty, Liberty*, and every *Blessing* whatsoever, in which consists either the Happiness of the *present World*, or the Opportunities of laying a Foundation for *that which is to come*. But as these Blessings never appear so valuable, when by a long uninterrupted Enjoyment we are accustomed to esteem them only the common Effects of the Course of Nature; as when at any Time, either by the *actual Want* of them, or by very *apparent Danger of losing* them, we are led to a juster and more considerate Estimation of Things, and with a more attentive View to behold the Hand from whence they all proceed; hence it is, that either after a *Deliverance* from the Weight of any severe Judgment, or after any remarkable *Escape* from the Terror of impending Danger, we seem to be in a more *particular* manner called unto *Thankfulness*; though in reality the same Acknowledgment is no less justly due, for the constant and uniform Protection of Providence. The Blessing of *Peace*, generally is justly esteemed and valued by *those only*, who have felt the Misery and Calamities of *War*: And yet without Question, 'tis a *greater Blessing*, to have been *always* preserved from those Calamities. The inestimable Benefit of *Liberty*, hardly ever meets with any just Returns of Thankfulness, but from such as have lately groaned under the cruel Bondage of *Tyranny* and *Oppression*; and yet, without all Controversy, in the true Estimation of Things, a *greater Acknowledgment* is due from those who have continually enjoyed that uninterrupted Protection. The Blessing of *Health* itself, that necessary Foundation of all other Enjoyments
whatsoever,

whatsoever, very rarely meets with any just Sense of its real and intrinsic Value, except in those who have long been afflicted with the *Want* of it; and yet, without Dispute, the continual *Preservation* of it, is a *greater Blessing* than the most unexpected *Recovery*. In like manner, in the Instance of the *particular Occasion* upon which we are assembled at this Time: Had it pleased God, that the devouring Pestilence had *nearly approached* our Dwellings; had it swept away our *dearest Relations*, or our most *valuable Friends*; or if even among those only, for whom we had no further Concern than what arises from the *general Ties* of Humanity and the *natural Sympathies* of Neighbourhood, we had seen *Thousands fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right Hand*: Who is there, that does not feel within himself with what a *profound Sense* of the divine Goodness, the Survivors would have expressed their *Thankfulness* for the Mercy of *their own Deliverance*. And yet, in reality, how insensible soever many of us may be of the real value of the Blessing, a *greater Blessing* it is (unless our own Unthankfulness makes it to us cease in Event to be so; a *greater Blessing*, I say, it is,) to have had so severe a Judgment prevented from approaching us *at all*. For *this Instance* therefore of the *divine Mercy* towards us, it becomes us to return in a *particular Manner* our most solemn *Thanks*. And *this* Expression of our Duty, will *then* be acceptable in the Sight of God; if it leaves upon our Minds a lasting Impression, that, *except we repent, we shall still all perish*. If the *thankfulness* of our *Mouths*, be not accompanied with the *real Sense* of our *Hearts*, and a suitable consequent *Obedience* in our *Lives and Practice*; God can still at any Time commission his *destroying Angel*, to smite

us in a Moment. Or, if we continue to provoke him, he can inflict Judgments upon us *much more severe* than the most devouring *Pestilence*; by delivering us *into the Hands of MEN*, whose *Mercies are cruel*. He can deliver us up into the *lasting Tyranny* of the spiritual *Babylon*, in whom for many successive Ages has not only been found *the Blood of Prophets and of Saints and of all that were slain upon the Earth*; but by whose *RELIGIOUS Sorceries* also, have *all Nations* been *deceived*: And whose Cruelty has not been more destructive to the *Lives* of Men, than pernicious to their *Souls* also, by *taking away the Key of Knowledge*, and establishing a *blind Implicit Ignorance*, utterly subversive of the very Foundations of all *rational Regard to God*, and of all *Truth, Justice, and Righteousness* towards Men. *Hitherto* it has pleased God, to preserve us from *this* calamity also; from this *severest* of all the divine Judgments; and which, of all others, has the *most nearly* and *most continually* threatned us. For *this Preservation* therefore, ought we *likewise* continually to return our most *solemn Thanks* to the divine Majesty. And 'tis *the more reasonable* so to do, because the Calamity I am now speaking of, is *that very Tribulation*, in Comparison of which our Saviour tells us, that all the Things mention'd by him in the Text, (*Nation's rising against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; and Famines, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes in divers Places; all these*, says he) are but the *BEGINNING* of Sorrows.

THE Manner, in which alone we can acceptably return *Thanks* to God for all his *Mercies* bestowed upon us, and for *averting these* and all other his *Judgments*, whether they be such as are more immediately of his *own* inflicting, or whether they be such as are brought

brought upon Men by the Wickedness and Perverseness of others : The *only Manner*, I say, in which we can acceptably return Thanks to the Almighty for any Blessing, is by having our Minds so influenced with a *real and lasting Sense* of the Goodness and Mercy of God in his Government of the World, as that we be thereby led effectually to *obey his Will* in the Course of a virtuous and religious Life, bringing forth *Fruits* meet for the *Acknowledgments* we profess to make to him. By *this*, and *this only* can our *Praises* be rendered an *acceptable Sacrifice* ; Psalm xxxi. 1. *Rejoice in the Lord ye RIGHTEOUS for it becometh well the JUST to be thankful.* But of the *Wicked* it may truly be affirmed, that, as their *Prayer*, so their *Praise* also is an *Abomination to the Lord.*

BUT more particularly : If we will behave ourselves worthily, as those who have *really*, a *thankful Sense* of the divine Goodness in averting the Judgments which have sometimes threatned us ; we must, in the

1st PLACE, as *Believers* in God, seriously and sincerely make use of our *Reason*, in banishing from among us that *atheistical Spirit* prevailing among some Men, who, whenever things are seen to proceed from *natural Causes*, immediately thereupon they endeavour to exclude all Consideration of God. As if the abstract Word, *Nature*, was a *real intelligent Agent* ; or meant any Thing more, than the *usual and ordinary Method* of God's governing the World. Which foolish Mistake arises meerly, from Men's not distinguishing the *NECESSARY Nature* of Things, from that *APPOINTED Course or Order of Nature*, which is nothing but the *Will of God* and the *Law of his Creation.* For Instance : That *two and two should*

make four, or that a Body should be only in one Place at once is the NECESSARY Nature of Things; and could not have been otherwise. But when we say, 'tis the Nature of Corn to grow; or, 'tis the Nature of pestilential Vapours to destroy: In these and the like Expressions, Nature is nothing but the voluntary Appointment of God: And natural Causes here, do really do more exclude the Consideration of God, than any one's affirming that 'tis the Nature of a Sword to kill, would be a reasonable and satisfactory Ground to forbear any further Inquiry by what Hand that Instrument of Death was moved. When the Inquiry is concerning the efficient Agency, by what Power Plants and Animals are formed, by what Power Corn grows, or Food nourishes, and the like: To answer in this Case, that 'tis their NATURE, or that 'tis natural for them so to do; is exactly the same Thing as if a Man being asked how and by what Architect a Palace was built, should answer, it was the Nature of it to be built of such a Form and Bigness.

2dly, As Christians; 'tis our Duty, not only in general to attend to the Hand of God in all the Dispensations of Providence, but moreover to observe distinctly how all the great Events that happen in the World, are the Accomplishment of those Things whereof our Lord admonished his Disciples from the Beginning; when, in order to wean them from the Vanities of this present World, and to raise their Thoughts to a better, he foretold them of the great Calamities which should fall upon the Earth by the righteous Judgment of God, and the much greater Calamities which should be brought upon them in particular by the Malice of unrighteous Men. See (says he) that ye be not troubled, for all these Things must come to pass:—For Nation shall

shall rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, and there shall be Famines and Pestilences and Earthquakes in divers Places: All these are the Beginnings of Sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all Nations for my Sake. The Application he makes to them of the whole is, (Luke xxi. 34.) Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these Things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

3dly, IF we look upon ourselves still more particularly, as Professors of the reformed Religion; the Consideration of every Blessing we receive from the Hand of Providence, whether temporal or spiritual, will naturally remind us to express our Thankfulness to God, in Ways suitable to the Purity of the Religion we profess, and to the Knowledge he has been pleased to vouchsafe us of his Truth. We must express our real Sense of his Goodness towards us, by sincerely endeavouring to obey his Will; by departing from every Kind, and from every Degree, of Superstition; by laying aside all unchristian Heats and Animosities among ourselves, by promoting universal Peace and good Will among Men; in a Word, by showing that we place our Religion, not in fantastical Notions or in empty Forms, but in a constant rational Acknowledgment of God, in an impartial Love of Truth, and in the habitual Practice of true Virtue, of Sobriety, Righteousness and universal Charity. This if we do; the Prophecy in the 91st Psalm, we may (not without Reason) hope, even in the first and literal Sense, but in the spiritual and final Sense certainly, it shall be fulfilled to US. *Whoso dwelleth under the Defence of the most high, shall abide under the Shadow of the Al-*

mighty ; He shall deliver thee from the Snare of the Hunter, and from the noisom Pestilence : Thou shalt not be afraid for any Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day : For the Pestilence that walketh in Darknes, nor for the Sicknes that destroyeth in the Noon-day : A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right Hand, but it shall not come nigh thee : There shall no Evil happen unto thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling.

S E R M O N X.

Preach'd in the

P A R I S H C H U R C H.

O F

St JAMES's Westminster,

On Sunday, March 31, 1717.

M A T T. xvi. 18.

*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter;
and upon this Rock I will build my Church,
and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail
against it.*

TH E Occasion and Connexion of these Words, is this: Our Saviour, examining his Disciples how far they *understood* the Doctrine they had been taught; asks them, *ver. 13. Whom do Men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?* The very Character he here and elsewhere gives himself, *I the Son of Man*, was a sufficiently plain Intimation *Who* he was. For the Phrase, *THE Son of Man*, necessarily signifies one who is so styled by Way of Eminence or Distinction; and, in Discourse with Persons who had been

been educated *Jews*, it could not be understood to refer to the Use of that Title or Character somewhere in the *Old Testament*. Now the Passage where 'tis mentioned in the most remarkable and distinguishing Manner, is in the the Prophecy of *Daniel*, ch. vii. 13. *Behold one like the Son of Man, came with the Clouds of Heaven; (The Son of Man, which is in Heaven, as our Saviour styles himself in the Gospel, John iii. 13.) And came to the Antient of Days, and they brought him near before him: And there was given him Dominion and Glory and a Kingdom, that all People, Nations and Languages, should serve him: His Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away; and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* The *Jews* all very well knew, that this was a plain Prophecy and Character of the *Messiah*. And therefore our Saviour, by taking upon himself that Title by Way of Eminence, *THE Son of Man*; clearly enough intimated, *whom* he professed himself to be. However, in order to put his Disciples upon a more distinct Declaration *how far* they had hitherto understood him; and thereby to introduce a new Occasion of giving them further and more particular Instructions; he asks them, *ver. 13. Whom do Men say that I am?* The Disciples answered; *Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?* Simon Peter answered, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* Then said Jesus unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in Heaven.* That is, the Confession you have made, is not a *bare human Conjecture* or Opinion; as the *Jews* had guessed him to be either
Elias,

Elias, or John the Baptist, or one of the old Prophets risen from the Dead : But your Confession (says he,) is the very Truth ; which God has enabled you to discover. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, ver. 18. Thou Simon the Son of Jonab, shalt for the future be known by the Name of Peter, which signifies a Rock, a firm and constant, an unshaken and immoveable, Professor of the Truth. 'Tis very usual in Scripture, to give Men in this Manner emphatical and significant Names. Thus Gen. xvii. 5. Thy Name shall be Abraham, for a Father of many Nations (so the Word Abraham signifies in the original) a Father of many Nations have I made thee. Again, Gen. xxxii. 28. Thy Name shall be called Israel ; for as a Prince hast thou Power with God and with Men, and hast prevailed. So here likewise, thou art Peter, that is, a Rock ; a firm and constant, a faithful and unshaken Witness, Support, and Defender of the Truth. And upon this Rock, upon this Firmness and steddiness of yours in professing and preaching the great Truths of the Gospel, upon this will I build my Church ; and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.

IN order to the fuller and clearer Understanding of which whole Discourse of our Saviour ; it will be necessary to explain from the Beginning, the Nature and Meaning, the Ground and Reason, of that Metaphor or Figure of speaking, which in numberless other Places of Scripture, as well as in this Text, is used with great Propriety and Elegance in the Description

scription of the Church of Christ. 'Tis to be observ'd therefore, that God having antiently placed his Name in *Jerusalem*, that is, having appointed it to be the Seat of his Throne and Worship, the Place of Confluence of the Worshippers of the one true God; and thereby made it by Way of Eminence *the City of the great King, the holy City*; it from thence became, in the prophetick Style and Language, a Type of *Heaven*. From hence, in the New Testament, the *State of Heaven* is figuratively stiled, *Jerusalem which is above*, Gal. iv. 26. *Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem*, Heb. xii. 22. And in the *Revolution* particularly, 'tis described at large, under the Notion of a glorious and happy City, ch. xxi. 10. *He shewed me that great City, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God; having the Glory of God, and her Light was like unto a Stone most precious:—And the City was pure Gold;—and the Foundations were garnished with all Manner of precious Stones.* To which Description, the Apostle plainly alludes. Heb. xi. 16. *He hath prepared for them a City: And again in the same Chapter, they desire (says he) * a better Country, that is, an heavenly: And, Abraham † looked for a City which hath Foundations, (in the original it is, THE City which hath THE Foundations,) whose Builder and Maker is God.* Hence still further, in Pursuance of the same Similitude, the *Church of God* even here upon *EARTH*, is stiled the *City, the Temple, and the House of God*. The *City of God*. Psalm xvi. 4. *The Streams thereof, shall make glad the CITY of God*. Heb. xii. 22. *Ye are come unto—the CITY of the living God,—the general Assembly and Church of the first-born whose Names are written in Heaven.*

* Heb. xi. 16.

† Verse 10.

Also the Temple of God: 1 Cor. iii. 16. *Ye are the TEMPLE of God*; And 2 Cor. vi. 16. *Ye are the TEMPLE of the Living God*. Eph. ii. 19. *Ye are Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*; and are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone; in whom the whole Building fitly framed together, groweth into an holy TEMPLE in the Lord; in whom you also are builded together; for an Habitation of God through the Spirit. And 2 Thess. ii. 3. *That Man of Sin,—fitting in the TEMPLE of God*; That is, a general Apostasy and Love of worldly Power, overspreading the visible Church. Lastly, 'tis styled likewise the HOUSE of God: 1 Tim. iii. 15. *The HOUSE of God, which is the Church*. Heb. iii. 6. *whose HOUSE are we*. 1 Cor. iii. 9. *Ye are God's BUILDING*. 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye also as lively Stones, are built up a spiritual HOUSE unto God*. And ch. iv. 17. *Judgment must begin at the HOUSE of God*.

Now the Church of God being thus usually, (upon the Occasion and for the Reasons already explained,) represented in Scripture under the figurative Notion of a holy City, or Temple, or House of God; the several Parts of it likewise, in Pursuance of the same Metaphor, are described proportionably under the like Characters, and with the like Figures of Speech, as the whole. Hence the Word *Foundation*, as denoting the most material Part and Support of the whole Building, is elegantly made Use of to signify either such Men or Things, such Persons or Doctrines, upon which the whole of Religion mainly relies, and by which it is principally supported.

SOMETIMES

SOMETIMES it is applied to *Doctrines*: To denote those *great*, those *Primary*, those *necessary* and *essential* Doctrines of Religion; upon which, all other true Doctrines are built; without which, Religion cannot subsist; and of which, no Christian can innocently or excusably be ignorant. These are styled, *Heb. v. 12. The first Principles of the Oracles of God*; and *Heb. vi. 1. The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, and *the Foundation*. In modern Language they are usually called *the Fundamentals* of Religion; the Doctrines, wherein *Christianity itself* consists; in Opposition to those, which distinguish from each other the several *Sects* or *Parties* of Christians. In the former, consists all true Virtue and Piety: The latter, are the Occasions of never-ceasing Contentions, Schisms and Uncharitableness. What these fundamental Doctrines in particular are, (though St Paul has given us an express Catalogue of them, *Heb. vi. 1, 2.*) seldom any Sect or Party of Christians are willing to define; because by so doing they would plainly discover, that the Things about which they generally most fiercely contend, are indeed no necessary Parts of Religion at all. But in the *Scripture itself*, these fundamental Doctrines are perpetually insisted on; and inculcated, as those on which in reality *the whole* of Religion depends. And the teaching or preaching of these Doctrines, is what St Paul calls *Laying the Foundation*, (*Heb. vi. 1. And 1 Cor. iii. 10.*) According to the Grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise Master-builder I have laid the FOUNDATION. But let every Man (says he) take heed how he buildeth thereupon: For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. The meaning is, no Man can make any Thing else to be fundamental

in Religion, besides what Christ himself has made to be so. *If any Man build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones*; if he preaches the true Doctrine of the Gospel, and builds thereupon virtuous Practice; *he shall receive a Reward*, ver. 14. If he corrupts the Doctrine of Christ in its essentials, and teaches Men any vitious Practice; he shall be punished very severely. *If he builds Wood, Hay, Stubble*; that is, if he teaches needless and useles, tho' not vitious Doctrines; *he shall suffer Loss*, he shall in great Part lose his Reward: Nevertheless, for the Sincerity of his Intention, *he himself shall be saved, yet so as by Fire*, ver. 15. The Sense is, *He shall be saved DIFFICULTLY, as it were out of the Fire*; According to the like Expression in St Jude, ver. 22. *Of some have Compassion; making a Difference; and others save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire.*

BUT further: The Word, *Foundation*, as it is thus sometimes applied Figuratively to *Doctrines* fundamental; so, at other Times, it is in a proportionable Sense, applied likewise to *Persons*. Thus (in the Passage before-cited,) *Eph. ii. 20. Ye are built upon the FOUNDATION of the APOSTLES and PROPHETS*. From whence is derived that elegant and lively Description, *Rev. xxi. 14. The Wall of the City had twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb*. Jesus Christ himself, is the chief Corner-stone: The Apostles and Prophets, are the Foundation: And the Church or entire Body of good Men through all Ages, are the whole Building or spiritual Temple of God; in which ye also, saith the Apostle, (*ye also, as living Stones*, 1 Pet. ii. 5.) *are builded together, for an Habitation of God through the Spirit*. And such Persons as, after the

first preaching of the Gospel, were, in a more eminent and illustrious Manner, Promoters of true Religion; are, by continuing the same Similitude, aptly called *Pillars*, Gal. ii. 19. James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be *PILLARS*. And Rev. iii. 12. *Him that overcometh, will I make a PILLAR in the Temple of my God.* Which Passages, by the Way, teach us to rectify a Mistake in the vulgar Interpretation of that noble Text of St Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 15. *That thou mayst know how to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the PILLAR and Ground of Truth.* That St Paul in one and the same Sentence, wherein he calls the Church the *HOUSE of God*, should at the same Time style it also a *PILLAR*, which is a Part of that House; is very hard to conceive. From the fore-cited Places therefore, and others of the like Import, where the same Word is always applied to single *PERSONS*; it seems very probable, that here also it ought to be understood, not of the whole Church, but of one Person only, even of Timothy himself: *That thou mayst know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God; that thou mayest know how to behave thyself therein in such Manner, (as being, or) as that thou mayst be a Pillar and an eminent Support of the Truth.* The Sense is much more reasonable, and agreeable to other Places of Scripture; and removes a difficult Expression, much abused and perverted by popish Writers to support their absurd Doctrine of the Infallibility of the Church.

HAVING thus fully and at large explained from its first Original, the Nature and Meaning, the Ground and Reason, of that Metaphor or Figure of speaking, which in numberless other Places of Scripture

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ture, as well as in my Text, is used with great Propriety and Elegance in the Description of the Church of Christ; it from hence becomes very easy to understand the true Sense of these Words of our Saviour, *Thou art Peter, Thou art (as thy Name signifies) a Rock; and upon this Rock will I build my Church.* The Church is the City, the Temple, the House or Building of God. In this spiritual Temple of God, *Jesus Christ himself is the chief Corner-stone, in whom the whole Building is fitly framed together.* And the *Apostles and Prophets, are the Foundation.* Among these, St Peter having, with a particular Forwardness and Zeal, made Confession of his believing Christ to be the *Messias*; was accordingly approved by his Master, and receives the following Answer: *Thou shalt be, (says our Lord,) one principal Foundation-stone in my Building.* By thy Firmness and Steddi-ness, by thy Courage, Constancy and Zeal in this Confession, thou shalt become an eminent Founder of my Church, a most successful Preacher of my Doctrine to the World, in the first Age of the Gospel, *Thou art Peter, Thou art a Rock; and upon this Rock I will build my Church.*

It follows: *And the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* That is, Opposition and Persecution, even unto *Death it self*, shall never be able to stop the Progress of my Gospel. The Word, which we here render * *Hell*, signifies in the Original, not *the State of the damned*, (for *That* is always in the Greek expressed by a very different Word;) But the Word here used, signifies always † *that invisible State in general only*, to which *Death* is the Gate or Passage. So that this Phrase in the Text, is exactly of the same

* Ἀδης.

† Γέννα.

Import with those Expressions in the Old Testament : *The Gates of the Grave, the Chambers of Death, and the Gates of Death.* Is. xxxviii. 10. *I shall go to the Gates of the Grave.* Prov. vii. 27. *The Way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* Job. xxxviii. 17. *Have the Gates of Death been opened unto thee ?* Psalm ix. 13. *Thou liftest me up from the Gates of Death :* And Ps. cvii. 18. *They draw near unto the Gates of Death.* When therefore our Saviour promises that the *Gates of Hell*, that is, of *Death* ; (for the Word *Hell*, as I now observed, when it means *the State of the damned*, is always in the Original quite another Word :) When, I say, our Saviour promises that the *Gates of Hell*, that is, of *Death*, *shall not prevail against* his Church ; his Meaning plainly is the same, as in those other Promises, *Matt. xxviii. 20. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World ;* your Mortality shall not put an End to the preaching of my Gospel. And *cb. xviii. 20. Where two or three, (wheresoever or whensoever, in what Place or at what Time soever in any Age of the World, (two or three) are gathered together in my Name ; there am I in the midst of them.*

Lastly, O U R Saviour adds in the next Words, immediately following the Text : *And I will give unto THEE the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven : And whatsoever THOU shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever THOU shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* The Sense is ; thou shalt first open the Kingdom of the *Messias*, and make the first Publication of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, (which we read was accordingly fulfilled, in the 2d, 10th, and 15th Chapters of the *Acts*.) And by the Terms of that *Doctrine* which I commission you to preach on
Earth,

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Earth, shall every Man's Sentence be finally and judicially determined of God in *Heaven*.

AND now, having distinctly explained the full Meaning of our Saviour, in this whole Discourse of his to *St Peter*; it will be very obvious to raise from thence the following Observations.

1st, I O B S E R V E, that according to the true Explication of the Word, it makes no real Difference at all in the Sense, whether by the *Rock* upon which our Saviour here promises to build his Church, be meant (as *Protestant* Expositors generally understand it) the *Confession* of *St Peter*, or (as the *Romish* Writers contend) the *Person* of *St Peter*. I say, it makes no Difference at all, as to the true Sense of the Words. For, if this *Rock* be the *CONFESSION* of *St Peter*; yet the Application of the Phrase to *him* in so particular a Manner, must needs be with Regard to his *personal* Firmness and Steadiness in that Confession. And if it be the *PERSON* of *St Peter*, that is here styled a *Rock*; 'tis still with Regard to his Firmness in that *Confession*. From whence nothing can be collected to the Advantage of the Cause of the Church of *Rome*. For

2^{dly}, I O B S E R V E, that the Word *Rock*, the *Foundation-stone* of a Building, a strong or well-laid Support, is not at all (as the Church of *Rome* ridiculously supposes) an Emblem of *Authority*, *Power* or *Dominion*; but it signifies *firm* and *constant*, effectual and successful, preaching of the Gospel at the Beginning: Which was the *Foundation* of the Church of Christ. Which *Church*, the Scripture tells us, was built upon the *Foundation* of the *Apostles* and *Prophets*. And in that *Foundation*, *St Peter* was a *Rock*, or a firm and eminent Part of it.

3dly, I O B S E R V E, that immediately after the speaking of these great Things to St Peter ; our Lord, (as it were with a *particular View* that it might be left upon Record as a Guard against that extravagant Opinion, which he foreknew future Ages, for the Purposes of Tyranny and worldly Dominion would entertain of St Peter's personal Authority :) our Lord, I say, takes Occasion in his very next Discourse with him, to rebuke him with a *sharper Severity* than he ever used toward any of the rest of his Disciples. *Ver. 23. Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an Offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* And probably for the very same Reason it is, that he was suffered to fall and to deny his Master, more shamefully than any of the other Disciples ; and that 'tis particularly recorded in Scripture-history, how St Paul afterwards withstood him to the Face, because he was to be blamed, Gal. ii. 11. Of the same Kind seems to be our Saviour's affecting, as it were, to speak always with very small Respect of the *blessed Virgin ; Woman, what have I to do with thee ?* And, yea RATHER blessed are they, that bear the Word of God, and keep it. And again, *Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren ?* — Behold, whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother and Sister and Mother.

4thly, I O B S E R V E, that as the Word Rock signifies nothing of *Authority* or *Dominion*, but a *Stone* or *firm Part* in the FOUNDATION on which the Church is built, so it is a *Character*, in which St Peter could not possibly have ANY Successors ; in any other Sense, than in that wherein he himself applies it to ALL Christians in general ; in his first Epistle, Ch.

ii. 5. *YE also* (saith he) *as living Stones, are built up a spiritual House unto God.* And St Paul to the *Ephe-
sians*, chap. ii. 22. *You also are builded together, upon
the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, into an
holy Temple: for an Habitation of God thro' the Spirit.*

5thly, I O B S E R V E, that what is here said to St Peter, is elsewhere applied equally to *ALL the Apostles.* The City of God, saith St John, had *twelve Founda-
tions, and in them the Names of the twelve Apostles of
the Lamb.* The Church was built equally upon them *All.* And our Saviour with great Expressness and Earn-
estness charges them, that there should be no such
Thing as *Dominion or Prebeminence* amongst them ;
but *whosoever* (says he) *will be great among you, let
him be your Servant,* Matt. xx. 27. Further: That
which is here spoken to St Peter about having the *Keys
of the Kingdom of Heaven,* is elsewhere expressly direct-
ed to *ALL the Apostles:* John xx. 23. *Whose soever Sins
YE remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever
Sins YE retain, they are retained.* The full Meaning
of which sublime Expressions, is that not even the
Apostles themselves, (much less that any of their falli-
ble *Succeffors,*) had a *discretionary Power* of forgiving
or retaining Mens Sins ; but, that they were appoint-
ed Preachers and Messengers of that gracious Covenant
of Reconciliation, according to the *Terms and Condi-
tions* whereof, God will either forgive Mens Sins or not.
God will judge Men according to *OUR Gospel;* or by
the Rule of that Doctrine, which *we* are commanded
to preach to the World. St Paul expresses the Sense
of this Trust, with the greatest Exactness of Expressi-
on, Rom. ii. 16. *In the Day,* says he, *when God shall
judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to
MY Gospel.*

SERMON XI.

Preach'd in the
PARISH - CHURCH
OF
St JAMES's WESTMINSTER,
On Sunday, March 23, 1718.

GEN. xv. 6.

*And he believed in the Lord, and he counted
it to him for Righteousness.*

THESE Words are Part of the History of the Patriarch *Abraham*. Who when, in his old Age, being yet childless, he had a Promise made to him, that his Posterity should be as the Stars of Heaven for Multitude; notwithstanding the natural Improbability of the Thing, yet (the Text tells us) *he believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him for Righteousness*. The Words are very remarkable: And they are in the *New Testament* cited, *three* several Times. By the Apostle St *James*, once: And by St *Paul* twice; in his Epistle to the *Romans*, and again in his Epistle to the *Galatians*. By St *Paul* they

they are cited to *prove*, that since *Abraham's Faith* was here reckoned to him for Righteousness, *before* the Institution of Circumcision; therefore *Justification*, or the Favour and Acceptance of God, is not confined and limited to the Observers of the *Works* of the *Jewish-law*, but extends itself to *all Men*, of *all Nations*, who * *walk in the Steps of the Faith of Abraham*. By *St James* they are cited to *prove* at the same Time, that since the *Faith of Abraham* here reckoned to him for Righteousness, was not a mere unactive *Belief*, but an *effectual Principle* of real active *Obedience*; therefore *Justification*, or the Favour and Acceptance of God, is confined and limited, though *not* to the Observers of the *Works* of the *Jewish Law*, yet certainly to the Practicers of the *Virtue and Righteousness* of the *Gospel*. The *Application* of the Words to *each* of these Purposes respectively, is as *natural* and *pertinent* as possible; and the *Inference* drawn from them, in *each Case*, is most *obvious* and *certain*. My Design is not, at this Time, to enlarge any further upon the Manner of reconciling *St Paul* and *St James*; (which has often been done upon *other Occasions*, and is *sufficiently evident* from the *single Observation* I now mentioned;) but to consider *what Matter of Instruction* may be drawn from the *Words themselves*; as they lie before us in the Text; *Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for Righteousness*.

FAITH, or *Belief in God*, is the *Foundation* and *Ground of virtuous Practice*. And in Proportion as this Foundation is deeply and strongly laid, in the same Proportion will the Superstructure be durable

* Rom. iv. 12.

and

and permanent against the Attacks of worldly Temptations. For though *Virtue is Virtue*, whether there were any God or no; and the doing of what is Right, would be unquestionably commendable, though there were no Reward or Punishment, here or hereafter: Yet, in that Case, the Nature of Things would be absurd; and the System of the Universe would be, in the whole, an inconsistency. For, that *that* which is *Right in itself*, and necessarily so judged to be by every *right Understanding*, and which by Consequence lays a necessary and perpetual *Obligation upon all*; should yet not be *finally and effectually supported*; is really and truly as *Great an Inconsistency* in the Notion of the *Moral Universe*, as if in the *natural World* any of the greatest and most exquisite Operations, were *without* any Correspondent *final Cause*. By *this Argument* therefore the wisest and most rational Men in the *beatben World*, who had no Assistance of Revelation at all, yet worked themselves up to a very strong Perswasion, both of the *Being* and of the *righteous Government* of God. By *the same Argument* the *Patriarchs*, who had no *Express* Revelation of a future State, yet reasoned themselves into such Acts of Obedience towards God, as overcame the strongest Temptations in the World. Of *Instances* of this Kind, the whole 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is an affectionate Collection. And the *Application* of *these Examples*, to *Christians* who profess to have a *more explicit* Knowledge of a Life to come, is Matter of very just and severe Reproach. That which *alone* falls, *at this Time*, under our Consideration; and is, more frequently than any, insisted upon in many *other* Places likewise
of

of holy Scripture ; is the *Example* of *Abraham*, *Abraham* believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for *Righteousness*.

F A I T H, is that *Belief* of a *God* ; of his *Existence*, *Perfections*, *Government* and *Promises* ; That *Belief* of Things *invisible*, and of Things *future* ; which is the proper *Motive*, whereby virtuous and religious Minds are supported in the Practice of what is Just and Right, in Opposition to all the *Allurements*, and to all the *Threatnings*, laid before them at any Time by an *idolatrous*, an *unrighteous*, or a *debauched* World. In Proportion to the *Strength* or *Weakness* of *this Faith*. Minds sensible of the natural and intrinsic Excellency of *Virtue*, are enabled to *resist* more and greater *Temptations* of all Kinds, and thereby to bear Testimony to the Excellency of *Virtue*, and to cause its Light to shine forth in the World : Which is promoting the *Glory* of *God*, and of his *Government*. These *Temptations*, are what the Scripture calls the *Trial* of *Mens Faith*. And *God*, when in the Course of his Providence, he permits them to be laid before Men, is in Scripture represented as *making Tryal* of them thereby. Not for *his own* Information, who knows perfectly the Hearts of all Men : But for *their own* Benefit, whose Minds are greatly improved thereby : And for the Advantage of *others*, who are extremely encouraged by such Examples. It has therefore been the Method of Providence from the Beginning, not only by the *Precepts* of *Nature* and *Reason*, confirmed by repeated *Revelations* of his Will, and strengthened with the Sanction of *Rewards* and *Punishments* ; but by *Example* also upon perpetual Record, of some *Nation*, *Family*,

mily, or very eminent *Person*, adhering singly to the Worship of the one true God, and to the Religion built upon that only Foundation, to *enlighten* the World, as it were, by a *Light shining in a dark Place*, and continually reminding them of the *Truth* they have departed from : Calling upon them (in the *Prophets* Expression) by a *Standard lift up unto the Nations*, and by an *Ensign on a Hill* ; or (according to our *Saviour's* Similitude) by a *City built upon a Hill*, which cannot be bid ; and by a *Light set on a Candlestick*, which giveth *Light unto all that are in the House*. Of this Kind, was a *Succession of Families* before the Flood ; and the Family of *Noah*, and of *Melchisedec* and *Job*, and perhaps some *others* also, and the *Patriarchs* after the Flood. Of the same sort, was the Nation of the *Jews*, even notwithstanding all their particular Corruptions, before the coming of *Christ* : And since that Time, such also has been the *Christian Church* ; in which, notwithstanding the greatest and most universal Corruptions, still the *Pearl of great Price*, the *Principles of Truth and Virtue*, have always more or less shined forth, in some particular Places at least, as a *Light* appearing through a very thick *Mist*. But that which my *present Subject* confines me to, is the single Example of *Abraham* : *Abraham* believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for *Righteousness*.

IF it be here inquired, with Regard to *this Method* in the Proceedings of Providence ; whence it comes to pass that the *Light of divine Truth*, and the *Manifestations* God has been pleased to make of himself to Mankind, have not been more general and universal : The Answer is ; that though in *this*, and indeed in all other Cases whatsoever, we know not in particular

the manifold distinct Reasons of God's Manner of acting, as indeed 'tis impossible we should ; yet in general 'tis manifest, that *this* Disposition of Things is according to the *Analogy* of God's usual Method of acting in all *other* Cases. It has seem'd good to infinite Wisdom to show forth itself, as in forming an unspeakable *Variety* of *other* Beings of all Kinds, so in creating particularly a great *Diversity* of *rational* Creatures, of Angels and Men ; endowed with very *different Capacities*, intrusted in numberless Instances with very *different Talents*, instructed with very *different Degrees* of *Light and Knowledge* ; so as to be each of them capable of being called to *Account*, of being *judged* according to their respective *Abilities*, according to the *Measure* and *Degree* of their respective *Knowledge*, according to the Nature of their several *Stations*, and of the *Talents* in innumerable different Circumstances committed to their Trust. The Case therefore *here* is the *very same*, even in Respect of *natural Reason* itself, as of other *more particular* Manifestations of the divine Pleasure. Both the *one* and the *other* have shined forth, only in particular *Places*, and at particular *Times*, in different *Degrees* ; as *Lights* sufficient to *direct* such as were *sincerely desirous* of finding out and following the Truth ; and to be a *Testimony* against *others*, who neither *liked* to retain their *natural Knowledge* of God, nor cared to be instructed in his *Will revealed*. But this, by the Way.

THE *Faith* of *Abraham*, so highly magnified in Scripture, and which (the Text tells us) was *counted* to him for *Righteousness*, evidenced itself principally in *two* remarkable Instances, the *one* was, his leaving his native Country at the Command of God, separating himself

himself from the idolatrous Nations around him, and going into a strange Land ; firmly believing that God *was faithful, who had promised* that his Posterity should inherit that Land ; and that from *him*, even when *as good as dead*, there should spring *so many as the Stars of the Sky in Multitude, and as the Sand which is by the Sea-shore innumerable*, Heb. xi. 12. The other Instance was, that * *when he was tried, he offered up his only Son*, in whom alone seemed to center all the Promises God had made him ; thus even against Hope (as St Paul most elegantly expresses it,) believing IN Hope ; and being fully persuaded, that *what God had promised, who quickeneth the Dead, and calleth those Things which be not as though they were, he was able also to perform*, Rom. iv. 17, 18, 21. The Excellency of this Faith, in both these Instances, consisted in this ; that it was a Principle of Virtue or Obedience to God, built upon this Foundation ; that God who ruleth over all, can and will certainly make good, either in the present or in a future State, all the Expectations raised in the Minds of virtuous and good Men, either by the *natural Knowledge* of his divine Attributes, or by the *revealed Declarations* of his Will. And *this* the Apostle, in each of the forementioned Cases, expressly declares. In the Case of *Abraham's offering up his Son*, the Ground he tells us the *Patriarch* went upon, was his Perswasion, that Death itself puts not an End to the Possibilities of the divine Favour ; but that God was able to make good the Promises given to him and his Son, even by a Resurrection from the Dead, Heb. xi. 19. In the other Case, that of the *Patriarchs* separating himself from the idolatrous Nations, and going into

* Heb. xi. 17.

a strange Country; the Apostle *thus* expresses the Ground and Foundation, on which his Faith was built. *Heb. xi. 8. By Faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a Place which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. And he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange Country;—For he looked for a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. And what that City was, the same Apostle distinctly explains, ver. 14. speaking of Abraham and his Posterity: They that say such Things, (viz. confessing that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth,) declare plainly that they seek a Country: And truly if they had been mindful of that Country from whence they came out, they might have had Opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better Country, that is, an heavenly: Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City. 'Tis evident therefore that the Faith of Abraham, was a Principle of Virtue or Obedience to God, founded upon the Expectation of a future State. And because he thus believed God, therefore 'twas counted to HIM; and to all others likewise in all Generations, who shall be governed, as he was, by their Belief in God; to them also it shall be counted for Righteousness.*

FROM this Explication of the Nature and Excellency of the Faith of Abraham, there may be drawn some very considerable general Observations, of great Extent and Consequence in the Notion and Practice of true Religion. As

1st, FROM hence we may observe, that true Faith is always founded upon Reason. Abraham believed, *What?* why, that God would certainly make good

good to *him* and his *Posterity*, every Thing that he had promised. And *Why* did he believe *this*? Why, because *Reason* told him, that, whatever *Improbabilities* appeared at present; yet God, who has Power over the *future* as well as the *present* State, was able to fulfil his Promises, even by a *Resurrection from the Dead*. This the Apostle *expressly* observes, upon that difficult Tryal of his offering up his Son, *Heb. xi. 19*. He accounted, that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead; from whence also he had received him in a Figure. He accounted: The Word in the Original is, (λογισάμενος,) he reasoned with himself: His Reason satisfied him, that the Power of God could as easily raise again his Son from the Dead, as it had at first caused him to be born from one as good as Dead. He had before received him as it were from the Dead in a Figure, by his being born to him in an extreme old Age; and now he doubted not, but God could literally restore him from the Dead again. This was a Faith truly founded upon Reason. And no less reasonable is it in US to believe now, that the same divine Power which at first created Men into the present Life, can as easily renew them into a life to come. In this, there is nothing contrary to the Dictates of right Reason, or to the Analogy of Nature. How different from this, is the Practice of those, who under Pretence of the divine Omnipotence, require Men to profess their Belief of Contradictions; such as is Transubstantiation, and the like, and all other natural or moral Impossibilities. For, to ascribe to the divine Power Things that are not at all the Objects of Power, and to suppose that God makes Things to be what at the same time he does not make them to be; is not magnifying the Power of God, but profanely making

a *Mockery* of it. *True Faith* therefore, is always founded upon *Reason*. And as, in all other Cases, the Strength of every *Superstructure* is proportionable to the Goodness of the *Foundation* on which it is built: So in Matters of *Religion*, the *Steddiuess* of every Man's *Virtue* is always proportionable to the *Firmness* of his *Belief* of the Principles he acts upon; and the *Stability* of this *Belief*, in Opposition to a careless and negligent *Credulity*, will always be found, upon any difficult Tryal, to be in Proportion as 'tis more or less *reasonably* grounded. For *this Cause* it is, that our Saviour so highly commends the Faith of the *Centurion*, who from the Analogy of his own being a *Man under Authority*, and having *Soldiers under him*, reasoned himself into a Persuasion that *Jesus* also was able to heal his Servant, *without coming himself in Person* to visit him: *Verily*, says our Lord, *I have not found so great Faith, no, not in Israel*, Matt. viii. 10. And in like Manner concerning the *Canaanish Woman*, who from the Similitude of the *Dogs eating the Crumbs that fell from their Master's Table*, argued reasonably that she, tho' a Stranger from the common-wealth of *Israel*, yet needed not wholly to despair of our Lord's Favour; *O Woman*, says he, *great is thy Faith*, Matt. xv. 28. Upon the same Ground the *Jews*, who could judge well enough about other Things, and argue reasonably about the Tokens of the *Sky* and the *Weather*, and make proper Observations in the Course of the *natural World*; but had no discernment at all, in Matters of *Religion*; are thus reprov'd by our Lord, *Luke* xii. 57. *Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* On the contrary, the *Bereans*, who searched the *Scriptures* carefully, to see *what Reason* there might be for their embracing

bracing the Doctrine preach'd by the Apostles ; are commended thereupon, as being of a more noble and generous Temper, *Acts* xvii. 11. And St Paul arguing to the *Corinthians* concerning a very important Point of Christian Doctrine ; *I speak* (says he) *as to wise Men, judge ye what I say*, 1 Cor. x. 15. This therefore is the first Observation, naturally arising from the foregoing Discourse : viz. that true Faith, is always founded upon Reason.

2dly, A second Observation is, that true Faith in God, never leads Men to the Practice of any Thing, that is essentially and in its own Nature immoral. Of this Sort are the *Idolatries* practised in the Church of Rome, fundamentally destructive of all both natural and revealed Notions of God. Of the same Kind are the *Cruelties* and *Barbarities* perpetually practised by them, fundamentally destructive of all Virtue towards Men, and of the very essential, eternal and unalterable Differences of Good and Evil. Things established by the mere positive Command even of God himself, may, without Controversy, be changed by the same Authority that appointed them. Further: Things contrary to that Part even of the Law of Nature it self, which is founded originally in the Will of God, and not in the Necessary and Essential Nature of Things ; may be done, upon particular and extraordinary Occasions, by the immediate and express Command of God. But that Part of the Law of Nature, which is founded, not on Will, but on the very Existence of God, and on the essentially and eternally immutable Nature and Relation of Things ; This is in no Circumstances capable of any Variation. For Instance : That the Life of an innocent Person should be taken away by the Authority of any Power upon Earth,

Earth, is contrary to the *Law of Nature*. Nevertheless, since the Right which even an innocent Person has to his Life, is not founded in the *essential* Nature of Things, but merely in the *Will* and *Free-Gift* of God; 'tis plain *he* may as justly appoint it to be taken away by any *other* Means he pleases, as by a *Fever* or a *Pestilence*. But had God commanded *Abraham* to forsake the Worship of *himself*, and turn to *Idols*; or had he commanded him to *bate* his blameless Son, or to *take Delight* in *Cruelty*, *Barbarity*, and *Tyranny*; the Command had been, in its Nature, *impossible* and *absurd*. Again: The seven wicked Nations of *Canaan* might, by a *particular* and *immediate* Command of God, as justly be extirpated by the Sword of the *Israelites*, as by an Earthquake, or (like *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*,) by Lightning from Heaven. But that, *without* any *immediate* and *express* Command, and under a *general* Pretence of being alone Possessors of the *Truth*, a *perpetual tyrannical Enmity* should be carried on against *virtuous* Men of all Nations, and a Power established of changing even the *Nature* of *Virtue* and *Vice*; this is a Wickedness which never had an Equal; and subverts fundamentally even *that Part* of the *Law of Nature*, which is founded, not on the *Will*, but on the very *Being* of God, and on the *necessary*, *essential*, and *eternal Difference* of *Good* and *Evil*.

3dly, *THE third* and *last* Observation I would here make, is, that *Faith* when spoken of in Scripture as a Moral Virtue, never signifies *mere Belief*: but always includes in it a Notion of *Fidelity* or *Faithfulness*; a *faithful* and *steadfast Adherence* to such *Principles*, even in Times of the greatest Danger and Difficulty, as are the *Foundation* or *Ground* of *Virtue*
and

and Obedience. Abraham believed God; (he had Faith or Fidelity towards God; adhered firmly to his Principles, and acted steddily upon them in Matters even of the greatest Tryal and Difficulty: He kept the Faith, as St Paul speaks concerning himself; or, as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it, he kept that which was committed to his Charge :) And therefore it was counted unto him for Righteousness: It was reckoned to him, it was allowed to him in his Account, (so the Word is in the Original); not, *INSTEAD* of Righteousness, but as being itself real Righteousness. This Matter is rightly represented by the Author of the Book of Eccclus. ch. xlv. 19. Abraham was a great Father of many People; in Glory was there none like unto him: Who kept the Law of the most high, and was in Covenant with him;—and when he was proved, he was found Faithful: Therefore he assured him by an Oath, that he would bless the Nations in his Seed, and that he would multiply him as the Dust of the Earth, and exalt his Seed as the Stars, and cause them to inherit from Sea to Sea, and from the River unto the utmost Part of the Land. And from hence 'tis very evident what the Writers of the New Testament intend, when they declare to us that Abraham, though he was not justified by the Works of the Law, such as Circumcision and the like, because this Testimony was given of him before he was circumcised; yet the Faith by which he WAS justified, was an active and steddy Principle of Works of Righteousness: And by that Faith was he therefore justified, because it was a * Faith which wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect. And the Application they make of it to Us, is, that they, and

* James ii. 22.

they

they only, who walk in the Steps of the Faith of Abraham, are in the religious Estimation, Abraham's Seed. That is; they only shall finally be accepted of God, whose Faith is, like His, a real Principle of Virtue and Obedience. Otherwise it matters little, whose Name we are called by, or whose Religion we profess. For, unless we bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance; God is able even of these Stones, sooner than of impenitent and incorrigible Sinners, to raise up Children unto Abraham; and unto Christ.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XII.

Preach'd in the
PARISH CHURCH.
O F
St J A M E S ' s Westminster.

On Sunday, May 3, 1719.

J O H N vi. 35.

Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.

AS in all Discourses whatsoever, there is no possibility of understanding the Sense of what is spoken, without understanding the Language in which that Sense is delivered: So in Scripture particularly, unless Men attend to the Nature of the Expressions therein used, and consider the Figures of Speech, which at the Time when those Books were written, were as common and well-known, as modern Forms of speaking are at this Day; Unless
this

this (I say) be considered, there is no Doctrine so absurd, but may be proved from the *Words* of Scripture, without Regard to the *Sense* ; and no Doctrine so clear, but may be darkened with Scraps of Scripture-Expressions, applied contrary to the Design and Connexion of the whole Discourse. Thus, for Instance, God's *granting Repentance* to Sinners, that is, *granting* them the Favour of having their Repentance and Amendment accepted instead of perfect Obedience ; has sometimes been understood in such a Manner, as if God *worked Repentance in or upon them*, as a *Workman* operates upon a *Machine*. Thus, God's declaring the *Christian Church*, instead of the *Jewish Church*, to be for the future his *elect* People ; has been thought a Proof of his having chosen *particular Persons* absolutely and unconditionally to *Salvation*. Thus, the Promise of eternal Life to them that *believe* ; though the Scripture in numberless Places declares, that thereby is meant *the Obedience* which proceedeth from Faith ; has yet been perverted to signify mere *Credulity*, a mere *Profession* of Religion, mere *Zeal* for *particular Parties, Doctrines or Opinions*. And the *Hope of Pardon* to them that *truly repent and reform their Manners*, purchased by the Blood of *Christ* ; has been turned into a *superstitious Reliance upon the Merits of Christ*, to supply the *Want of Repentance and Amendment of Life*. Again : The Power of *preaching the Gospel*, and the Command to *teach all Nations upon what Terms* their Sins should be forgiven them ; has been made a Foundation for a *Pretence* to a *Power of forgiving Sins*, upon *other Terms* than those of true Repentance and Amendment of Life. And, to mention but one Instance more ; our Saviour's styling himself the *Bread of Life*, giving his *Flesh for the Life*

of

of the World, and saying concerning the Sacramental Memorial of his Death, *this is my Body*; though the *very same Figure of Speech* is used in numberless other Places of Scripture; and though our Saviour himself expressly admonishes us in the Instance of *this very Figure*, John vi. 63. *It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the Flesh profiteth nothing: the Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are Life*; yet how often have these Passages been alledged as Proofs of *Transubstantiation*, of the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, of the *Adoration of the Host*, and of other monstrous *Confusions* in the Worship of God! Against this Evil, there is *no* other possible *Remedy*, but studying the *Scripture itself* carefully and sincerely; in order to find out the real *Sense and Meaning*, instead of abusing the *Words* of it. Other Means of discovering the Truth in these Cases, there can be none. Tradition, is but a *Fiction* and a *Speetre*. *Opinions of Men*, are *Nothing*; being infinitely *contradictory* to each other; *mutable* as the Successions of *Ages*, and *various* as the different *Climates* and *Nations* of the Earth. Only with this Difference; that at *Rome* a *tyrannical Despote* of *Truth*, and a *Contempt* of *inquiring* after it, is greater than ever was in any other Place; greater in Degree, and larger in Extent; more *Authoritative*, more *wicked*, and more *absurd*. But if Men would use the *Scripture* as they do other Books, studying it without *Prejudice*, looking for the *Doctrine* of Christ in it, and not bringing with them their *Opinions* before they read it; the *Sense* of Scripture would be found within itself. *Search the Scripture*, was our Saviour's Direction to the Jews, John v. 39. And the Reason is given by St Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 16. *'Tis profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction*

in Righteousness ; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.

THE Discourse of our Saviour in this *sixth* Chapter of *St John* whereof my Text is a Part ; is a most remarkable Instance and Proof of what I have now said. Never was any Thing more unreasonable than the Use which has sometimes been made of such of our Lord's Expressions as these which follow. *Labour for that MEAT, which endureth unto everlasting Life, v. 27. The BREAD of God, is he which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the World, v. 33. I am the Bread of Life ; He that cometh to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst, v. 35. The Bread that I will give, is my Flesh which I will give for the Life of the World, v. 51. Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you, v. 53. And v. 58. He that eateth of this Bread, shall live for ever.* Nothing, I say, can be more unreasonable, than the Use which has sometimes been made, and that by great Authorities too, of these Expressions of our Saviour. And yet if we look over the whole Scripture, and consider the Phrases of this Kind, that frequently occur in reading ; 'twill be surprizing to observe, in how *usual* and *frequent*, in how *expressive* and *elegant*, in how *natural* and *obvious* a Manner, the very *same* Figure of Speech is made use of, upon a *Multitude* of Occasions. In the following Discourse therefore upon these Words of our Lord, (*I am the Bread of Life : He that cometh to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst :*) I shall *1st* endeavour, from the whole Tenour and Phraseology of Scripture, to explain the Doctrine here laid down ; and to give an Account of the particular

tular Figure of Speech, in which it is expressed. And 2dly, I shall make some Observations thereupon, and Inferences from it.

I. IN order to explain the Doctrine here laid down, and to give an Account of the particular Figure of Speech in which our Lord has expressed it; 'tis to be observed, that as the *Happiness of Heaven*, and the *final Favour of God*, is by the inspired Writers represented under the Character of *LIFE*, and *everlasting Life*; so, in the *present Time* here upon *Earth*, the *State* or *Habit of Virtue*, is the *HEALTH* of the *Soul*; And every Degree of *Instruction* in the *Knowledge of Truth*, and every *Act of Righteousness*, every Degree of *Improvement in virtuous Practice*, is its *FOOD* and *NOURISHMENT*. On the contrary, *Sin* is in Scripture spoken of as a *Disease* or *Sickness*; Isaiah i. 4. *Ab sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity; the whole Head is SICK, and the whole Heart faint.* And a *HABIT of Wickedness* is elegantly set forth, as being, in a *spiritual Sense*, the *DEATH* of the *Soul*; Eph. ii. 1. *You who were DEAD in Trespasses and Sins.* A *Reformation* or *Recovery* from such a State, is described as a *Resurrection from the Dead*; Eph. ii. 4. *God who is rich in Mercy, even when we were dead in Sins, hath QUICKENED us (that is, raised us to Life,) together with Christ.* And every Degree of *Improvement* in the *Knowledge of Truth and Right*, is, as it were the *Support, Nourishment, and Sustenance*, of a *rational and virtuous Mind*, Deut. xxxii. 2. *My Doctrine shall drop as the Rain, my Speech shall distil as the Dew; as the small Rain upon the tender Herb, and as the Showers upon the Grass.* And Job xxix. 22. *Unto me Men gave ear;—and my Speech dropped upon*

them: They waited for me, as for the Rain; and they opened their Mouth wide as for the latter Rain. To one who considers these and the like Expressions, nothing can be more natural and obvious than our Saviour's Way of speaking in the Gospel after the same Manner: *John vii. 37. If any Man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink; If any Man has probity of Mind to receive Instruction, and is desirous to understand the Truth, let him attend to the Doctrine of the Gospel.* The same Invitation is repeated, *Rev. xxi. 6. xxii. 17. I will give unto him that is athirst, of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely. The Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.* In the Prophet *Isaiab, ch. lv. 1.* The same Figure is carried still further: *Lo, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters,—come ye, buy, and eat; yea, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price;—Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight itself in Fatness: Incline your Ear, and come unto me; hear and your Soul shall live.* And *Prov. ix. 3. Wisdom,* (that is, the Doctrine of Virtue and true Religion, of the Fear of God and the Practice of Righteousness; this Wisdom) *crieth upon the highest Places of the City: Who so, is simple, let him turn in hither: As for him that wanteth Understanding, she saith to him, come eat of my Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have mingled: Forsake the Foolish and live; and go in the Way of Understanding.* There was no Jew in the Days of the Old Testament, but perfectly understood the Sense of these beautiful and expressive Figures of Speech; And they are now as obvious and plain to be apprehended, (in all Cases where

where Prejudice and Interest do not interpose,) as the most modern Forms of speaking. Hence a sincere Desire of knowing and doing the Will of God, 'an unprejudiced Love of Truth, and an uncorrupt pursuing of what is right ; is by our Saviour called *Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness*, Matt. v. 6. And the Perfection of his own Practice, is most emphatically set forth in the following Expression, *John* iv. 34. *My MEAT*, saith he, *is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work*. In the Book of *Job* it is, *cb. xxiii. 12. I have not gone back from the Commandment of his Lips ; I have esteemed the Words of his Mouth more than my necessary Food*. And in *Jeremiah*, thus, *cb. xv. 16. Thy Words were found and I did EAT them ; thy Word was unto me the Joy and Rejoicing of mine Heart*. On the contrary, concerning those who delight in *Wickedness* and take Pleasure in *Unrighteousness*, 'tis affirmed in Scripture, that the Soul of the Transgressor *EATETH* violence, and *DRINKETH* up Scorning (or Iniquity) like Water. *Job xxxiv. 7. xv. 16. Prov. xiii. 2. And any peculiar extraordinary Corruption in the Doctrine or general Practice of any particular Party of Men, is styled the Leaven of those Men, or of that Vice : Matt. xvi. 11, 12. I spake not to you concerning BREAD, that ye should beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees,—but of the DOCTRINE of the Pharisees, which (Luke xii. 1.) is Hypocrisy. And 1 Cor. v. 8. Not with the LEAVEN of Malice and Wickedness, but with the UNLEAVENED BREAD of Sincerity and Truth. By the same Figure of Speech, the Elements or the first plain and fundamental Principles or Instructions of Christianity, are styled the sincere MILK of the Word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. and 1 Cor. iii. 2.*

And a *more perfect* or improved Knowledge in the Doctrines of the Gospel, is, according to St Paul's Description, *strong MEAT belonging to them that are of full Age, even those who by Reason of Use have their Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil.* Heb. v. 14. The *imbibing, digesting, and practising* these Precepts of true Religion, is, in our Saviour's Language, *the MEAT which endureth unto everlasting Life,* John vi. 27. And *cb. iv. 14.* 'tis the *WATER, which whosoever drinketh of, shall never thirst; but, it shall be in him a Well of Water, springing up into everlasting Life.* To Persons not conversant in the Scripture-Language, 'tis no wonder that such Phrases as these, seem strange and not easy to be understood. But from the Passages before-cited out of the Old Testament, 'tis apparent they were very common Figures of Speech among the *Jews*; and consequently ought to be interpreted according to that Analogy. In the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, particularly, there is a Passage which gives singular Light to the whole Discourse of our Saviour, whereof my Text is a Part: *cb. xxiv. 19.* Wisdom is introduced, saying, *Come unto me, all ye that be desirous of me, and fill yourselves with my Fruits. For my Memorial is sweeter than Honey, and mine Inheritance than the Honey-Comb. They that EAT me, shall yet be Hungry; and they that DRINK me, shall yet be thirsty. He that obeyeth me, shall never be confounded; and they that work by me, shall not do amiss. All these Things are the Book of the Covenant of the most high God. The Phrases; they that eat me, shall yet be hungry; and they that drink me, shall yet be thirsty; signify, in a lively and most elegant Manner of Expression, that the Pleasure arising from the Knowledge of Truth and from the*
Practice

Practice of Virtue, is a Pleasure always New, always Satisfying, and of which a Man can never be Weary. The Phrase used by our Saviour in the Text, (*he that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst;*) though it be very different in the Construction, yet the Allusion is plainly the very same, and the Sense not at all unlike: *Whosoever embraceth my Doctrine, and obeys my Instructions, shall never WANT any Thing necessary to his eternal Happiness; seeing he has the Means which will more certainly support him unto everlasting Life, than Meat and Drink maintains and nourishes the Body in this mortal State.*

THIS being once carefully observed, there remains no further Difficulty in understanding our Saviour's whole Discourse through this Chapter. His calling himself the *Bread of Life* in the Text, and in *ver. 48*; the *living Bread*, *ver. 51.* and the *Bread which cometh down from Heaven*, *ver. 50 and 58*; plainly signifies this only; that the Belief and consequent Practice of the Doctrine of the Gospel, is the Support and Preserver of the Soul unto eternal Life. His saying, *ver. 57. He that EATETH me, shall live by me*; is clearly explained by the Words of Wisdom. *Eccl. xxiv. 21. They that EAT me, shall yet be hungry*: And by our Lord's own Words in the Text, *He that COMETH to me, shall never hunger; and he that BELIEVETH on me, shall never thirst*: Where the Words, *coming to him* and *believing on him*, appear evidently, by the Words *hunger* and *thirst*, with which they are joined, to be explicatory of what in the 57th verse is styled *Eating*. And his explaining himself, *verse 29, 40, and 47*, manifestly shows the same Thing: *This (says he) is the Work of God, that*
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ye **BELIEVE** on him whom he has sent:—*This is the Will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and BELIEVETH on him, may have everlasting Life:—Verily I say unto you, he that BELIEVETH on me, hath everlasting Life; I am that Bread of Life.* There remains only one Phrase more in this Chapter, wherein the same Figure of Speech is carried still further; our Lord in the 51st and 53^d and following Verses, setting forth the same Thing under the still higher Figure of eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood, which, in the Text, and in several other Verses of this Chapter, he had before expressed by styling himself *The Bread of Life*. But this also, when that which has been already said be well understood, will have no great Difficulty in it. For as, in the 15th Chapter of this Gospel, our Lord expresses the spiritual Union between him and his Disciples in the following Manner, *verse 5. I am the Vine, and ye are the Branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him; the same bringeth forth much Fruit:* And as St Paul without any Danger of being misunderstood, sets forth the same Notion still more sublimely thus, *Eph. v. 30. We are Members of his Body, of his Flesh and of his Bones:* So in the Place before us, after our Lord's styling himself the *Bread of Life*, in the same Sense as *Wisdom* in the Book of Ecclesiasticus says concerning herself, *They that EAT me, shall yet be hungry;* there cannot, without great Perverseness, be put a wrong Sense upon what he adds, *verse 56, He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* For, why should not what our Lord calls *eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood*, be as easily understood of our imbibing and digesting his Doctrine, converting it
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by Way of spiritual Nourishment into the very Habit of our Mind, and into the Practice of our Lives : as St Paul is by all Men, even of the meanest Capacities, understood without any difficulty to speak in a spiritual and figurative Sense, when he says of all good Christians, that they are *Members of Christ's Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones?*

II. HAVING thus from the whole Tenour and Phraseology of Scripture, explained the *Doctrine* laid down in the Text, and given an Account of the particular *Figure of Speech* wherein it is expressed : It remains in the *second Place*, that I briefly make some Observations thereupon, and Inferences from it. And

1st. FROM what has been said, it appears, that in this whole Discourse of our Saviour in *this* sixth Chapter of St *John's* Gospel, there is no Mention at all made of the *Eucharist* or *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. The Discourse was spoken by our Saviour long before the Institution of that Sacrament: And therefore it could never have been applied by any to that Subject, had they not thought the Phrases of *eating his Flesh* and *drinking his Blood*, incapable of being explained to any other Sense. But from the many Passages both of the Old and New Testament, which I have now alledged to this Purpose, 'tis evident that those Phrases, in the *Jewish* Language and Manner of speaking, do very easily signify, the *receiving* and *imbibing*, the *digesting* and *practising* a *Doctrine*: And that the only Reason why our Lord was misunderstood by many that heard him, was that Dullness in some, and that *Perverseness* in others, arising from unreasonable *Prejudices*, which we find him so often complaining of in the Gospel.

2dly,

2dly, I F the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is not at all spoken of in *this Chapter*; then much less can any Argument be drawn from any Expression therein, in Favour of the *Romish Doctrine of Transubstantiation*. Receiving and imbibing, digesting and practising his *Doctrine*; is what our Lord here calls, *eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood*. And 'tis called so by the *like Figure of Speech*, (though without any *Reference* to each other in this Place,) as is used indeed in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in that of *Baptism* too. The *Bread and Wine*, are not themselves literally the *Body and Blood of Christ*; but the *inward Thing signified* by those *outward Symbols*, is the *Body and Blood of Christ*: Just as, in the Sacrament of *Baptism*, *the being immersed in Water*, is not itself the *Death and Burial of Christ*, but only an *outward Sign*; the *inward Thing signified thereby*, is *the being buried with Christ in his Death*. And the *Body and Blood of Christ*, is *verily and indeed taken and received* by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper; just in the same Manner, as Persons baptised do *verily and indeed die and are buried with Christ*. No Man ever was so absurd, as to understand the *one* literally; and there is no more Reason to understand the *other* so: But by *both*, Men are intitled, if they be worthy Receivers, to the spiritual Benefits purchased by Christ's Death.

3dly, F R O M hence we may learn in general, how to understand many *other* metaphorical Expressions in Scripture. After the same Manner of speaking, as Christ is here styled the *BREAD of Life*; he is elsewhere styled the *WAY and the Life*, the *RESURRECTION and the Life*, the *Door* and the *Vine*, He is called the *Word*, and the *Wisdom*, and the
Power

Power of GOD ; and he is called *the Righteousness* (or *Justification*) of MEN. He and the Father, are affirmed to be one ; and of Paul and Apollos 'tis said, *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one.* The *Eucharist* is spoken of, as a *Sacrifice* ; and *Praise* is expressly called a *Sacrifice* ; and the *Bodies* of Christians are styled *holy and living Sacrifices* : For no other Reason, but because these Things, in the *Christian Institution*, succeeded in the Place of the *Sacrifices* which had been offered among the *Jews*. And therefore when some antient Christian Writers style the *Eucharist* an *unbloody Sacrifice* ; modern Writers who understand this Phrase in a *literal* Sense, are just as absurd, as if they should understand St Paul literally when he calls Christians *The CIRCUMCISION without Hands* ; by which he plainly means nothing more, but that the *Christian Church* succeeded in the Place of the *Jewish*, who had in the *literal* Sense been styled *the Circumcision*. And by the same Figure of Speech ; because God who had formerly chosen *Jerusalem* to place his Name there, has now declared that he will be worshipped in *all Places alike* ; therefore the whole World has sometimes been elegantly styled, *The TEMPLE of God* ; And every Man, and every moral Duty, is a *Sacrifice* acceptable to him.

4. Lastly, SINCE these and the like figurative Expressions, contain always in them a moral Meaning and Signification, we ought carefully to observe, that in *this their moral Meaning* only, can they ever be of any Use to us. * *The Flesh*, (saith our blessed Saviour, *profiteth nothing ; the Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are Life.* The Participation of the Sacrament, with-

* John vi. 63.

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out true *Faith*, is *Bread*, without the *Body of Christ*. *Faith* itself, without *Obedience*; is (as *St James* expresses it,) a *Body without Soul or Life*. *Relying on the Merits of Christ*, without doing the *Will of his Father which is in Heaven*; can be of no more *Use* to us, than the *Death of Christ* would have been, if there had never been any *Resurrection*. All great Corruptions of Religion in all Ages, have arisen by separating the Letter thus from the Spirit; and in amending this Fault, lies the principal Efficacy of true Virtue and Goodness.

SERMON XIII.

Preach'd in the
PARISH CHURCH.

OF
St JAMES's Westminster,

On Sunday, Dec. 15, 1723.

ECCLES. vii. 29.

*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath
made Man upright; but they have sought
out many Inventions.*

TIS not only at this Day, the greatest and
most difficult Question among *Christians*;
but it was so of old among the *Jews* un-
der the Law; and, beyond *that*, even among the
wiser *Heathens* also, under the State of Nature; *How*
Sin and Misery came first into the World: How *Man*,
whose rational Faculties seem naturally to lead him
to discern and choose what is good, yet in Event for
the greater Part has his Understanding so blinded and

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apt to be deceived, his Will so biassed and inclined to Evil, his Appetites so corrupt and perpetually tempting him to forbidden Objects ; his Passions so ungovernable, and unwilling to submit to Reason ; that if a Judgment was to be made, not from the *Faculties* of Men, but from their *Actions* only ; if we were to take our Estimate, not from the Obligations of our *Nature*, but from the Experience of Mens *Practice* ; it might be imagined that, not *Virtue* but *Vice*, was natural to Mankind, and the proper Effect of their original Composition. For otherwise ; if *originally* God made Men *upright*, and *Virtue* was naturally most agreeable to their Frame ; how then was it *possible* (will it be obvious to ask,) that they could almost universally *seek out* so many evil *Inventions* ? And if the *Inventions* they have sought out, are so many and so evil, that they can hardly be conceived to arise but from something faulty in their very *Nature* ; how then can it be comprehended, that God nevertheless created them *originally upright* ? If *God* be perfectly *good*, (as perfect Goodness is of necessity included in the very Notion of *God* ;) how is it possible that any of the Works of *his* Hands, should become so *evil* ? And if the *Inventions* of Men be so *evil*, as Experience too manifestly declares them to be ; how is this reconcileable with a firm Belief, that yet *God*, who made them, is perfectly *good* ? When we begin with consulting our *natural Notions of God*, Reason and Demonstration represent him to us of necessity so intirely and absolutely good, that we are apt to expect, *whatever* is the Product of such a Cause, *whatever* is the Workmanship of such an Author, should have impressed upon it no obscure Image, should carry with it no small Resemblance, of the Perfections of its Maker.

Maker. On the *other* Hand, when we begin with considering Things as *in Fact* they *are* in the World, and observe the extreme Wickedness of the greater Part of Mankind ; 'tis then very hard to apprehend, how so very *frail* and *sinful* a Creature, could come out of the Hands of an All-merciful and good *God*. Too hard was this Speculation, for the Philosophy of the heathen World ; and it drove many of their Disputants to argue themselves into an Imagination of an irresistible *evil* Cause, in perfect Opposition to, and of equal Power with, the Supreme *Good*. But the Impossibility of two Supreme Causes, being demonstratively apparent ; Others, with much greater and better Reason, resolved all the Evil and all the Wickedness in the World, into the *free Choice* and *voluntary* Corruption of Men, whose Nature God originally had created good. And yet even still a Difficulty remained, *whence* it came to pass, that tho' the *Nature* of Man, as of God's creating, had indeed nothing *actually* in it but good ; yet it should be so *frail* and fallible, so *prone* to evil, and so *apt* to be seduced, as by Experience it was found to be. The true occasion of this, is *briefly intimated* to us in the sacred Writings, in the History of the *Fall of Man*. And evidently there is nothing any Way inconsistent with the divine Goodness in *this*, that God whose inexhaustible Wisdom and Power shows forth itself most properly in producing a never-failing variety of Creatures of different Natures, Capacities, and Faculties ; should suffer the *Posterity of Adam* to be of a more frail and fallible Nature, more subject to Temptation and more prone to be deceived, than they would otherwise have been ; after their first Parent had forfeited those Advantageous Circumstances of his first Creation,

tion, to which he had *originally* no more Right, (but by the free Gift and mere good Pleasure of God,) than he had to the Powers and Perfections of an *Angel*. And *Adam* might with as just Reason have complain'd against the Goodness of God, because he was not created an *Angel in Heaven*; as *we* can, for our not being born in *Paradise*. Nor is it more inconsistent with the divine Goodness, to suffer *us*, in Consequence of *his* introducing Sin into the World to become *more* frail and fallible, more peaceable and obnoxious to Temptation, than *be* at first was; than it was inconsistent with the same Goodness, to make *him*, by the *original* Condition of his Creation, subject to Temptation and to Sin *at all*. In a Word: Either we must be so unreasonable as to assert, that the Goodness of God cannot allow him to make *any* Creature at all; because no Creature can be originally and absolutely incapable of Sinning: Or else, by the same Reason he may likewise, reconcileably with his Goodness, make all *Variety* of Creatures, in all the various Degrees of Frailty and Liableness to Temptation: Always *excepting* that, of being *necessarily* and *unavoidably* Wicked and Miserable; and always *supposing*, that God will finally judge with perfect Equity these *frail* Beings, each of them *according to what he has, and not according to what he has not*. And still *much less* inconsistent will it be with the same divine Goodness, to permit the Posterity of a sinful and depraved Creature, to continue by *natural Consequence* in a *lower* and *more* obnoxious Rank of Beings, than possibly they would have been placed in, had no such Depravation been introduced either by our first Parent, or by *any of his Successors*.

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SOME Writers have indeed, without sufficient Warrant from Scripture, carried this Matter further; and have asserted that for the Sin of *Adam*, not only himself and his Posterity were made subject to *Death*, and to all the *Miseries of this mortal Life*, consequent upon the Earth's being cursed for his Sake; and that they became very *weak* and *frail*, exposed to *more* Temptations, and *more* prone to Sin; but that more-over *all Mankind*, for that *one* Transgression of their *Forefather*, were actually liable to be condemned to the *Punishment of eternal Torments*; and were by *Nature* so *Wicked* and so entirely indisposed to all Good, that the Will of Man had thenceforward no more Liberty to choose what was Right, than a dead Man has Power to restore himself to Life. But these Things, the Scripture does not teach; how great soever it represents the Depravity of Human Nature. And indeed, to suppose that *God himself* sends Men into the World, under an absolute *Necessity* in their very Nature, of being *Wicked and Miserable*; is not much better, than what some Heathens imagined, of their being made so by the Power of an opposite supreme *evil Principle*. How much more wise and reasonable is the Determination of *Solomon* in the Text: Who in Matters of Difficulty and deep Inquiry, in Things wherein 'tis impossible for the narrow Understanding of short-sighted Mortals to discover the whole Order and Method, the Occasion and Reason of many of the divine Proceedings; advises us to *separate the certain from the Uncertain*; to adhere to what we certainly know to be true, and not be moved from it by the Uncertainty of what we cannot discover. For so he concludes a difficult and profound Inquiry; *Lo, this only have I found.*

HE had been in vain searching into the Depths of Providence, and attempting to comprehend the Counsel of the most high. And indeed, what Wonder is it, that Man, who sees so *small a Portion* of the Works of God from the Beginning to the End, should not be able to comprehend the Wisdom of the *Whole*? *All this*, says he, *have I proved by Wisdom*, ver. 23. *I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me: That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?* And then he concludes in the Words of the Text; *Lo, this only have I found.*

AMONG the Things impossible to be discovered by human Understanding, there is still always *something* certain and to be depended upon; *something*, in which a rational Person may acquiesce and rest satisfied; *something*, on which he may with Confidence fix his Foot. *Lo, this have I found.*

THE particular Inquiry, upon Occasion of which the wise Man makes this Conclusion, was the Consideration of the Difficulty I now mentioned; *viz.* What might be the Reason of the exceeding great Depravity and Corruption of Human Nature; ver. 25. *I applied mine Heart to know, and to search, and to seek out Wisdom, and the Reason of Things, and to know the WICKEDNESS of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness.* And the Result was: *Lo, This only have I found; that God hath made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.*

IN the Words, we may observe these two Things. 1st, A general Direction or Intimation, that in *all Questions of Difficulty* whatsoever, we ought to separate what is certain, from that which is uncertain: And never think it a sufficient Reason to depart from *one Truth*, that our Faculties have not enabled us to discover

discover *All*. Lo, *THIS ONLY* have I found. 2dly, An Application of this general Direction, to that great Question in particular; whence the Corruption and Depravity of Humane Nature arises. *This* have I found, that God has made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.

First, HERE is a general Direction or Intimation; that in all Questions of Difficulty whatsoever, we ought to separate what is certain, from that which is uncertain; and never think it a sufficient Reason to depart from one Truth, that our Faculties have not enabled us to discover *All*. Lo, *This only* have I found. The Works of God, are infinite and boundless; and the Understanding of Man is limited and finite. We cannot therefore comprehend the whole Works of God, because our Understandings are not infinite; and yet, because we have Understanding given us, therefore we ought to endeavour to understand them in Part. The Scripture frequently declares the Incomprehensibleness of the Works of God: And no where more emphatically, than in this Book of Ecclesiastes, Ch. iii. ver. 11. He has made every Thing beautiful in his Time; also he has set the World in their Heart; so that no Man can find out the Work that God maketh, from the Beginning to the End. Again, ch. viii. 17. Then I beheld, all the Work of God, that a Man cannot find out the Work that is done under the Sun; because though a Man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a wise Man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it. And ch. xi. 5. As thou knowest not what is the Way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child; even so thou knowest not the Works of God, who maketh all. Nevertheless,
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both by *Reason* and *Scripture* we are directed to *study* the Works of God; that, by what we *can* discover, we may learn to admire and adore his Wisdom in what we *cannot* discover; and by what we *are able* to understand, be convinced of the Excellency of the Things that *exceed* our Comprehension.

TO instance in *Particulars*. In *what Manner* this beautiful Fabrick of the World was *made*, and *how* the several Parts of it in particular were *formed*; the greatest Philosophers upon Earth have by no Means been able to discover. *This only have they found*, that these Things are evidently the Works of an *intelligent* and *powerful* Cause, and cannot possibly be the Effects either of *Chance* or of *Necessity*.

IN *what Manner* the several Steps of Providence in the *Government* of the World, shall finally be cleared, has been a Thing too hard for the wisest of Men to comprehend, and a Depth inscrutable to the most enlarged Understandings. *This only*, are they well assured of; that *the Judge of all the Earth*, will do *what is right*; will deal equitably with all Persons, according to their respective Circumstances; and that, at last, *he will* conspicuously *be justified in his Saying*, and *be clear when he is judged*.

IN *what particular Manner* God's *Fore-determination* of many Events, and his *Fore-knowledge* of all, is reconcileable with that *Liberty* of human Actions, without which there could be no Religion, no Punishment, no Reward; is a Secret which we shall then perhaps clearly and thoroughly understand, when the *Books* of Providence shall be laid open, and the *Secrets of all Hearts* shall be disclosed; when *the Lord* shall come with *ten thousands of his Saints*, not only to execute *Judgment* upon Men, but also to convince

(as St Jude expresseſſes it,) that is, to ſatisfy, in their own Reason and Conſciences, *all that are ungodly among them, of their ungodly Deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have ſpoken againſt him.* In the mean Time, *this only* do we know for certain, and in *this* may we with Assurance acquieſce, that *God made not Death, neither hath he Pleaſure in the Deſtruction of the Living*; nor doth he, by any abſolute Predetermination, bring Wickedneſs and Miſery neceſſarily upon any Man; but *ungodly Men with their own Words and Works call it unto them.*

AGAIN: *Wherein the Nature and Dignity of the Perſon of Chriſt* (beyond what God in Scripture has thought fit to reveal to us) preciſely conſiſts, and in *what particular Manner* thoſe ſuper eminent Attributes, which the Scripture aſcribes to him, are communicated to him from the Father; is what neither Men nor Angels can perfectly underſtand. *This only* may Chriſtians of *all Capacities* be aſſured of, and may with Confidence depend upon it; that whoſoever imbraces the *Doctrines* which our Saviour taught, and obeys the *Laws* which he has delivered; and, in order to obtain Remiſſion of paſt Sins, makes conſtant *Application to God in HIS Name* and through *his* Interceſſion, as being our *alone Mediator* with the Father; and lives in conſtant Expectation of his appearing finally as our *Saviour and Judge*, to complete our Reconciliation in the Day of Redemption, and to reward every Man according as his Work ſhall be: Whoſoever (I ſay) heartily profeſſes this Faith, and perſeveres in this *Practice* by patient Continuance in well-doing; though he enters into *no* difficult Speculations, and confines his Thoughts entirely to
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what he clearly understands ; yet *this* he may be assured of, and abundantly sufficient it is, if but *this only* he can find ; that (according to the gracious Terms of the Gospel-Covenant) he shall certainly be Partaker of the Salvation purchased by the Son of God, *manifested in the Flesh*.

Lastly ; To give but one Instance more, (which is *that* alluded to by *Solomon* in the Text :) *How* it comes to pass, that in a World created by infinite *Goodness*, and governed by the Providence of the same *good God*, yet *Wickedness* should abound so universally as it does ; and our first Parents introducing Sin into the World, should be permitted to have so great and lasting an Effect, that many Men seem as it were *originally* and *almost naturally* to have strong Inclinations to Vice ; though something has already been offered, and more will be said in the following Part of this Discourse, to explain this Difficulty in some Measure ; yet, unless we knew the *whole Series* of Providence from the Beginning to the End, from the Creation of the Universe to the final Consummation of all Things ; 'tis no great Wonder we should not fully understand the whole Counsel of God, nor be able, in this *very short* and imperfect State, to search out to the Bottom so unfathomable a Depth. *This only* do we find demonstrably certain ; as being both clear in the *Reason* of Things, and most expressly moreover declared in *Scripture* ; (and abundantly sufficient it is, for our present Satisfaction ;) that, whatever Difficulties may now arise in this Matter, yet *in the End* it shall appear to the Conviction of Sinners, (so that every *Mouth shall be stopped* before God ; stopped not by *Power*, but by the *Reason*

Reason of the Case; and every *Tongue* shall confess his Justice,) that *God* did make *Man* upright; only *they* themselves have sought out many *Inventions*.

IN these and numberless other Instances, appears the Reasonableness of the *general* Direction or Intimation given us in the *Text*; that, in *all Questions of Difficulty* whatsoever, we ought to *separate* what is *certain* from that which is *uncertain*; and never think it a sufficient Reason to depart from *one* Truth, that our Faculties have not enabled us to discover *all*. *Lo, this only have I found.*

IN *finite* Understandings, which are not capable of comprehending *all* Knowledge, nor of discovering *all* Truth; 'tis the highest Improvement they can arrive to, and deserving the greatest Commendation, to be able rightly to distinguish what they *can*, from what they *cannot* discover; and so to rest satisfied and acquiesce in what they find, as not to entertain any Doubt concerning the Certainty of *one* Truth, because of the Uncertainty they chance to meet with in *another*.

IF we find by strong and undeniable Arguments, that the beautiful *Order* of the several Parts of the World, could not possibly arise from *Chance*; nor the infinite *Variety* of Things therein, from blind and unintelligent *Necessity*; nor the exquisite *Fitness* wherewith every Thing is adapted to its proper End, from any *other Cause* than the Will and free Operation of an All-powerful and All-wise Being; Is not *this* sufficient Satisfaction to a reasonable Mind, though he cannot comprehend the *Manner how* each particular was formed? Or, because there are *some* Things, which, for *what End* they

they were made, our narrow Understandings cannot discover; is there *therefore* from thence any Colour of Reason to doubt, whether any Thing was made for *any End at all*.

IN like Manner, if we find by evident Demonstration, that he who in the Beginning *made* the World by his *Power*, cannot but *govern* it unto the End by his *Providence*; is not *this* sufficient to satisfy a rational Person, tho' he cannot at present account for *all* its Proceedings? Or, is it in any Degree reasonable, because the Counsels of a great Prince *before* they are entirely put in Execution, are above the Comprehension of a mean Person; that *therefore* that mean Person should conclude the Counsels of the Prince to have *no Wisdom* in them, or should doubt whether he had *any Counsels* or *Designs* at all.

AGAIN: If we are by Experience as much assured of the *Liberty* of our *Wills*, as we are of the *Truth* of our *Understandings*, or the *Reality* of our *Senses* themselves; and have the same Thing moreover confirmed to us, by all the *Promises* and all the *Threatnings* of God; and that the divine *Fore-knowledge* is no *Fore-determination* of our Actions, but only an *unerring Judgment*, or such a *Kind* of *Prescience* (whatever *that* be,) as is consistent with *Liberty*, and necessarily *presupposes* the *Liberty* of those Actions which are foreknown to be free; have we not abundantly wherein to acquiesce, tho' we know not the particular *Manner* of the divine *Fore-knowledge*? Or, because there is some *Uncertainty* in the *particular Manner* of reconciling it with human *Liberty*, is there *therefore* any Reason to call in Question the *Thing itself*, which of all others is the most absolutely *certain*? and pretend to doubt whether

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we have *any* Liberty, that is, whether there be *any* such Thing as *Religion*, any such Thing as *Reason*, any *Understanding* in Man, or any *Power of acting* at all ?

FURTHER: If we are assured by a clear and distinct Revelation, that God has sent his *Son* into the World, to teach us our Duty, and set us an Example of practising it ; to *die for the Sins*, and *rise again for the Justification*, of all who shall *effectually* repent and *reform their Manners* ; to make Intercession for us at present, and bring us hereafter unto Glory : Is not *this* sufficient to all the Purposes of Religion and Happiness, tho' we understand not the *Manner* of his *Generation* from the Beginning, nor *what* the Particulars of *that Glory* were, *which he had with the Father before the World was* ? Or, because reasonable Men do not take upon them to *define*, (as the *Schoolmen* have *presumptuously* done,) *how* and in *what particular Manner* our Lord was before all Ages the *Brightness of his Father's Glory* and the *express Image of his Person* ; is there *therefore* any Reason to doubt, whether we have any *Salvage*, any *Religion*, any *Hopes of Happiness* at all ?

Lastly ; IF it be clearly demonstrable by right Reason, and moreover asserted in express Words of Scripture, *that God has made Man upright, but they themselves have sought out many Inventions* : Have we not wherein to acquiesce, tho' *this only* be all that we *have found* ; and we do not perhaps distinctly understand the Reason, *why* the All-wise Governour of the World, has thought fit to *permit Men* thus to corrupt themselves ? And this brings me to the

Second PARTICULAR I propos'd to speak to ; namely, the Application of the *general direction* I

have been hitherto discoursing upon, to that great Question in particular, whence the Corruption and Depravity of Human Nature arises. Lo, this only have I found, that God has made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions. But the Time not permitting to enter upon this, I shall conclude at present with two very brief Inferences from what has been already said.

THE FIRST is; that the Rule laid down in the foregoing Discourse, extends only to the *express Revelations of God*, and not to any Doctrines or explanations of Men.

THE SECOND is; that, from what has been said, we may see the great Unreasonableness of *Scepticism* in Matters of Religion; and the Absurdity of those, who from the *Uncertainty* of some Questions of great *Difficulty* and of *small Consequence*, would draw Reasons for doubting in Matters of the *greatest Certainty* and of the *utmost Importance*. In Questions of *Natural Philosophy*, Men do not so argue: In the Management of *worldly Affairs*, they do not so act; but *separate* always what is *certain*, from that which is *uncertain*: And the *uncertainty* of one Thing, does not hinder them from relying, in all the Business of Life, upon the unquestionable *Certainty* of another. There is the same, nay much stronger Reason, why they should act in like manner in Matters of Religion: Where that which is of the *greatest Importance*, is always of the *greatest Certainty*; and whatever is *less certain* and more difficult to be understood, is also always proportionably of *less Moment*. We have upon this Head, the final Advice of *Job*, and the last and most considerate Words of *Solomon*. The former of whom, concludes his Discourse concerning the

the uncertainty of all *other* Knowledge, with this admirable Reflection, *Job* xxviii. 28. *And unto Man he said ; the Fear of the Lord, That is Wisdom : and to depart from Evil, is Understanding.* The latter having in a whole Book elegantly represented the Confusion and Uncertainty of all human Affairs, sums up his whole Discourse in this wise Admonition, *Eccles.* xii. 13. *Let us bear the Conclusion of the whole Matter : Fear God, and keep his Commandments ; for this is the whole, the whole Duty and the whole Happiness of Man.*

SERMON XIV.

Preach'd in the
PARISH CHURCH.

O F

St JAMES's Westminster,
On Sunday, Dec. 22, 1723.

ECCLES. vii. 29.

*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath
made Man upright; but they have sought
out many Inventions.*

THE Book of Ecclesiastes is a Collection of the general Conclusions drawn by Solomon, from his Observations upon Human Nature, and on the State of the World. He was a Person, of whom the Scripture says, that *God gave him Wisdom and Understanding exceeding much; such as none of the Kings had, that were before him; neither shall there any after him, have the like; 1 Kings iv. 29. and 2 Chron. i. 12.* His own Experience of all the Enjoyments of Life, and his high Station in the World, gave him the greatest Opportunities, and the largest Field, to improve his Understanding by the most general Observations; and to make the truest Judgment of the real Value, of every Thing in the World. *I the*

Preacher was King over Israel in Jerusalem ; and I gave my Heart to seek and search out by Wisdom, concerning all Things that are done under Heaven, chap. i. ver. 12. I communed with mine own Heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great Estate, and have gotten more Wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem ; yea, my Heart had great Experience of Wisdom and Knowledge ; and I gave my Heart to know Wisdom, and to know Madnes and Folly, ver. 16. The Result of all was, that he found every Thing to be Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit. That, even in Wisdom itself, is much Grief ; and he that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth Sorrow. That Laughter and Joy, is Madnes ; and Mirth, what Benefit is there in it ? That, when Goods increase, they are increased that eat them ; and what good is there to the Owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their Eyes ? That he considered all the Oppressions that are done under the Sun ; and behold, the Tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no Comforter ; and on the Side of their Oppressors was Power, but they had no Comforter. That, with Respect to the Shortness and Uncertainty of Life, MAN also knoweth not his Time ; but as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare, so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil Time, when it falleth suddenly upon them. That, notwithstanding this, yet the Hearts of the Sons of Men were full of evil ; and Madnes is in their Heart while they live ; and after that, they go to the dead. That he applied his Heart to know and to search out the REASON of these Things ; and to know the Wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madnes. That all these Things he proved by Wisdom, and said he would be wise, but it was far from him ;

him; for *that which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?* The *Particulars* were impossible even for *his Understanding* to discover. But, in general, this he was sure of, that *God was true, tho' every Man was a Liar; that God was righteous in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works, and Man, the Cause of all his own Misery. Lo, this only have I found, that God has made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.*

IN the Words, I have observed these two Particulars. 1st, A general Direction, or Intimation; that in all Questions of Difficulty whatsoever, we ought always to *separate* what is *Certain*, from that which is *Uncertain*; and never look upon it as a sufficient reason to depart from *One Truth*, that our Faculties do not enable us to discover *All*. *Lo, This only have I found.* 2^{dly}, An Application of this general Direction, to That great Question in particular, *Whence the Corruption and Depravity of Human Nature arises. This only have I found, that God has made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.*

THE 1st of these, I have already discoursed upon. It remains that I consider at this This time, (2^{dly}) the Application the Wise man makes of this general Direction, to That great Question in particular, *Whence the Corruption and Depravity of Human Nature arises. This only have I found, that God has made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.* Now there is in *this*, as in most other Questions, something that is *Uncertain* and Difficult to be explained; something that the Understanding even of *Solomon himself* could not attain to; something, that 'tis not possible for us to find out, nor
needful

needful for us to desire to know ; something, that is to be resolved perhaps into the mere *good pleasure* of God ; or rather into Reasons (for God does nothing *without* reason,) which *We* at present are *not at all* capable of judging of ; *why* God in his infinite Wisdom thought fit, among that immense and boundless Variety of his Works to make Some Creatures of such a *particular degree* of Capacity and Understanding, so frail, so fallible, so liable to be seduced and corrupted, as Mankind is. To *this part* of the Question 'tis sufficient to reply with the Apostle ; *Shall the Thing formed, say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour ?* That is, Hath not God a Right to make what Variety of Creatures, and of what different Capacities, he pleases ? But then there is also *on the other hand* something in the Same Question that is very *Certain*, something that is *infallibly true* and may be depended upon, something in which a reasonable Mind may *acquiesce* and rest satisfied ; *viz.* that though God *has* indeed made us *frail and fallible*, yet he has not made us *necessarily Wicked* ; He has made us, subject and liable to *Temptation*, but not of necessity Slaves to *Sin*. That we are *Capable* of Corrupting ourselves, is indeed the Consequence of that Nature which God has given us ; But all *Actual* Corruptions, are the Effects of our *Free Choice*, and the Fruit of our *Own Inventions*. God *has made man upright, but They have sought out many Inventions*.

OF This Declaration of the Wise man, there are two parts, 1st, A justification of *God*, from all possibility of being charged with the Sins of Men : *God has made Man upright, 2^{dly}, A confession, that the*
Sin

Sin and Misery of *Men*, is wholly owing to themselves: *But they have sought out many Inventions.*

I. HERE is a justification of God, from all possibility of being charged with the Sins of Men: *God has made Man Upright.* Could wicked Men with any truth affirm, that Wickedness was the Fault of their *Nature*, and not merely the Corruption of their *Will*; it would be a just Excuse both in the Sight of *Men* and before the Tribunal of *God*, to alledge that they *Were* only what *God made* them, and what they could not but of Necessity be. There is nothing therefore more constantly and sollicitously inculcated in Scripture upon all Occasions, than that Mens destruction is of *themselves*, and not the Appointment of him that made them. And upon *this* are grounded all the *Promises*, and the reasonableness of all the *Threatnings* of God. But though Wickedness is *not* Mens Nature; yet Weakness and Temptation, and Liableness to Sin, *is*. And the very Nature of a Probation-State, the Promises of Reward to Obedience, and the Threatnings of Punishment to them that shall comply with Temptations; *supposes* men to be *Capable* of being corrupted, and to be always *in danger* of being seduced into Sin.

'TIS evident therefore, 1st, that God's having made Man *upright*, does not signify his having made him *incapable* of Sin, or exempt from all Temptation. No: This is perhaps a State that no Creature ever was, or can be, created in. For *he chargeth even his Angels with Folly*, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight. Not only the Angels that *fell*, and incurred irrecoverably the final Wrath of God, appear evidently to have been created capable of Sinning: But the *good* Angels themselves, who kept their first Estate,

Estate, and never forfeited their Title to the Divine Favour; even *These* the incomprehensible Purity of the Holy One charges with Folly. And nothing is perfectly faultless in the All-seeing Eyes of Him, who alone is Goodness and Holiness it self. And indeed, could any Creature be made originally and absolutely incapable of sinning; there would be no Room for Trial, there could be no Probation, there could be no Obedience, and no Reward: But the Happiness which such a Creature would enjoy, would be by Nature compleat and indefectible, like to the Happiness of God Himself. Which is inconsistent with the Nature of a Created Being.

2dly, THEREFORE; Neither from This expression of God's having made Man *upright*, ought it to be imagined, that God originally created *Man* in That Excellency of Nature, which *Angels*, who yet were liable to Sin, were at first endued with. There is a *proper* Excellency, peculiar to every Species or Kind of things. And as, in the *Natural World*, God created every thing perfect in its kind; and beheld, when he had finish'd it, that it was very good; And yet One thing, though perfect in its Order and Degree, is nevertheless very far from equalling the Perfections of Another, that belongs to the more exalted Rank of a nobler Species: So, in the *Moral World* of rational and intelligent Creatures, there are Capacities and Faculties, there are Perfections and Excellencies, *peculiar* to *every* Sort of Beings, and appportionate to their proper Subject. And as we always understand, when we say God has given to such or such a person, Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge; As we always (I say) understand thereby, that he has indued That Person in a remarkable

able manner with the Knowledge and Wisdom of a *Man*, not with That of a Superior and more Powerful Spirit: So, when the Preacher declares in the Text, that God did make Man *upright*; 'tis manifest it must be understood, that he created him with the *Uprightness*, not of an *Angel*, but of a *Man*; with *such* an Uprightness, as is compatible to a frail, mortal, and fallible Creature.

3dly, FURTHER yet; Neither can the Words of the Text be so interpreted, as if Solomon meant to speak of *That particular Uprightness*, wherein our first Parent was created in *Paradise*; in opposition to *that general State of Corruption*, which has ever since prevailed in the World. For he does not insist upon *This*, that God created our *first Parent upright*; but upon *This*, that, notwithstanding all that *can be said* of the Meanness and Frailness of our Nature, notwithstanding all the disadvantages we *can* alledge to our selves to lie under in consequence of Sin having been brought into the World; yet *still* God has made *Man* upright. *Man*; That is, the *Species* or whole Race of *Men*: All those particular *Men*, who in the following Words are said to *have sought out many Inventions*. The Uprightness therefore here spoken of, cannot be *That original Uprightness* which was forfeited by the Sin of our first Parent; but *That continued Uprightness*, with which every man Now comes into the World, notwithstanding the Fall; *That Uprightness*, which every wicked man, in his own proper Person, is justly condemned for voluntarily departing from, by *seeking out* and following his own evil *Inventions*. And *This Uprightness*, which belongs even to *Fallen Man*, and which is necessary to discharge God from the Sins of Men, consists in
This;

This ; That, notwithstanding all the *Weakness* and *Infirmity* of our Nature, which God, who considers that we are but Dust, readily allows for ; and, notwithstanding all the *Consequences* of the Fall of *Adam*, which are abundantly provided against by the Death of *Christ* ; and notwithstanding all our *Temptations*, and all our proneness to Sin : Yet no man is under a *Necessity* of being Wicked : No man can say 'tis the Fault of God's Creation, no, not even of *that frail Nature* which he receives from *Adam*, but the Wicked Choice of his own unreasonable Will, that makes him *live vitiously*, and comply with those *Temptations* which in this frail State naturally and perpetually surround him. That we are perpetually *liable to Temptation* ; is indeed the weak Condition of our Nature, and the Unhappiness of our present State. But *Temptation* is not *Sin* ; And being *tempted*, is not inconsistent with *Uprightness* : That is, 'tis not inconsistent with *such Uprightness*, as God expects of us in this very frail, fallible and imperfect State. Did God *now* require of us the Uprightness of *Angels*, or even the Uprightness which our *First Parents* ought to have maintained in Paradise ; we might perhaps have had reason to complain, that the Abilities of our Nature were not answerable to what was expected from us. But since the Obedience and Holiness required of us, is only of the *same Kind and Proportion*, with *that Uprightness* our Nature *still* retains ever since the Fall ; 'tis evidently not the Fault of *God*, nor of *that Nature* he even *Now* gives us, but the wicked *Inventions* only of our own Hearts, that make us wicked and miserable. God has given us *Eyes* to discern the Light, *Understanding* to distinguish between Good and Evil, a *Will* whereby we
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are enabled to choose the One and refuse the other. And in the *Truth* or *Reality* of these Faculties, not in the *Perfection* of them; that is, not in their being such as *CANNOT* be deceived or imposed upon, but in their being such as *do not necessarily deceive US* without our own Negligence and great Fault; in *this* consists the Uprightness wherewith God now sends Men into the World, even since the Fall.

THERE is only *One* great Objection, against what has been hitherto offered upon this Head. And that is, that the Doctrine of *Original Sin* has by Divines sometimes been so explained, as if Man, since the Fall, had no remains left of those Powers and Faculties, which alone distinguish him to be a free and rational Agent. Which Explication if it were true, 'tis Evident the *Sins* of Men would indeed immediately become chargeable upon God. And, far from making Man *upright*, as *Solomon* affirms; it would on the contrary be true, that he now makes Men *not so much as capable* of any Religion at all. For the clearing of this Prejudice therefore; we need only here, as in all other Difficulties, *separate* the Certain Doctrine of Scripture, from the Uncertain Explications of Men: And then the whole Ground of the Objection, will be taken away. Now *All* that the Scripture teaches concerning this Matter, is contained in what it affirms, *1st*, Concerning the *Transgression it self* of our first Parents; and *2dly*, Concerning the *Consequences* of that Transgression, to them and their Posterity.

1st, THE History of the *Transgression it self* of our first Parents, is related very briefly in the third Chapter of *Genesis*. And though neither there, nor elsewhere in Scripture, it is called by that Name;

yet it may very properly be called the *Original Sin of Men*; because it was the first introducing of Sin into this World; and, before it, there was no such thing as Sin upon Earth. The *Original Sin of Men* therefore, was the *Actual Sin* of our first Parent; But it could not be the *Actual Sin* of any other Person, because it was committed before any other had a Being. To affirm that the *first actual Sin* of *Adam*, was imputed to all Mankind as well as to him; is to affirm what the Scripture does not teach. And besides; if to impute to *other Persons* the *actual Sin* of *One*, be to account it *Theirs* as well as *His*; 'tis evident this is impossible with God, who cannot account *Sin*, or *any thing else*, to be what it is not.

BUT 2dly, Though the *Actual Transgression* of our first Parent, was *His* only, and not *Ours*; yet there are the *Consequences* of thus introducing Sin into the World, which are common to *Him* and his *Posterity*. And these are, *Mortality*, *Exclusion out of Paradise*, the *Miseries of the present Life*, and a greater *Liableness and stronger Temptation to Sin*, in their *corrupt Affections*. God threatned *Adam*, that in the Day he eat of the *forbidden Fruit*; that is, whensoever he should knowingly *presume* to do what God had thought fit to *forbid*; he should *surely die*. And had that Threat been *immediately* executed, 'tis plain his *Posterity* could have had no Being at all; and as plain, that no Injustice could thereby have been done to *them*, who never *Were*. But the Mercy of God granted *Adam* a Reprieve; and, instead of dying immediately, he only became *Subjeſt to Mortality* by his Sin. That is; being now excluded from the Benefit of the *Tree of Life*, (which was a *Means* or an *Emblem of Immortality*,) consequently his *natural*
Mortality

Mortality must of necessity *actually* take place upon him. And so it must likewise upon all his Posterity. In which matter ; since it was merely the Effect of God's Mercy towards *Adam*, to permit us a Possibility of beginning to live ; it cannot be thought unjust, that he should appoint us to die. Especially since *that Death* which was introduced by *Adam*, (and *whatever* would have been the *Consequences* of it in the *future State*,) was as universally removed by the *second Adam*, (who is the Lord from Heaven,) as it spread universally after the Transgression of the *first*. For *as in Adam all die*, (all Men are made mortal ;) *even so in Christ shall all be made alive*, (shall be restored from that natural Mortality, *Rom. v. 22.*) And *as, by the offence of One, Death came upon all Men to Condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of One, the free Gift is come upon all Men to justification of Life*, *ver. 18* ; that is, to a Possibility again of obtaining *eternal Life*.

As to the *Exclusion out of Paradise*, and the *Miseries of the present Life* consequent upon God's cursing the Earth ; they are, with regard to the *Posterity of Adam*, only *natural and necessary* Consequences of his losing those free Gifts and Favours of God, which neither *They* nor *He* ever had any Claim of Right to enjoy. And, after all ; the miseries Men bring upon themselves in this World by their *own Sins*, are much greater than those they suffer in Consequence of the Transgression of *Adam*. For, notwithstanding God's Curse upon the Earth, the Condition of Men would be in many Degrees better than it is ; nay, even very tolerable ; did it not perpetually happen, that One Man's Sin makes him a Tyrant to Others, and an Enemy to himself. And that *Men*, who

have their *Beings* through Mercy, should undergo the *natural Calamities* of this *mortal State*; cannot be unjust with God, any more than that they should at all be *born Mortal*. Nor can *any Reason* be given, why God might not have made Men *at first* to live but such a certain Number of Years as they *Now* do, if he had so pleased; nor why he might not *originally* have put them into the World with only *such a Proportion* of Good to be enjoyed by them, as virtuous and good Men may *Now* enjoy in this World, if all Men were truly virtuous and religious.

Lastly; As to the *Temptations and Liableness to Sin*, which are greater and stronger since the Fall, through Mens corrupt Affections; they are by no Means inconsistent with *that Uprightness*, which I am now speaking of. For *Temptation* is not *Sin*, but the *Tryal* and the Occasion of *Virtue*. And God, who knows how to make just *Allowances* for every one's Case, with the most exact Proportion and Equity; may prove the sincere Obedience of his Creatures, by what Tryals and Temptations he himself, in his All-wise Government thinks fit to permit. In all which, 'tis certain that God makes no Man *Wicked by Nature*; but every Man *then* sinneth, *when he is drawn away of his own Lust and inticed*. For, *when Lust has conceived, it bringeth forth Sin*; and *Sin, when 'tis finished, bringeth forth Death*, James i. 15. And this may suffice for Explication of the *first* Part of the wise Man's Assertion in the Text, in justification of God from all possibility of being charged with the Sins of Men; that *God has made Man upright*.

II. HERE is in the 2d Place a Confession, that the Sin and Misery of Men, is wholly owing to *themselves*:

themselves: But *THEY* have sought out many *Inventions*. And concerning this, there needs not much to be added. For when it has once been made appear, that God made Man *upright*; that is, that notwithstanding all the *Infirmities* of their Nature, he has yet endued them with *proper Faculties* for their *present State*, to enable them to perform the Duty that is expected of them, according to the Proportions of a *Man*, in this very imperfect State; it follows in Course, that the *Corruptions* wherewith they deprave themselves, are not the Fault of that *Nature* which God has given them, but the perverse *Inventions* of their own Wills. And indeed, whoever looks into the World, cannot but observe, that much the greater Part of the Vices of Men, arise plainly from bad Education and ill Example, from the Allurements of the World and the Temptations of ill Company, from the Violence of ungoverned Passions and the Perverseness of unreasonable Desires: None of which things do belong properly to the *Nature* of a reasonable Creature, but are unreasonable and violent and therefore *unnatural* Corruptions of the Faculties wherewith God has indued us.

To enter into the *Particulars* of *All* vitious Habits, would be impossible, as well as disagreeable. But, to mention briefly the three *great Heads* or Instances of Corruption.

1st, WITH respect to our Duty towards *God*. Is it not evidently agreeable to the nature of rational Creatures, to adore and worship, to love and to obey, the supreme Author and Preserver of their Being? And is it not an *unnatural Invention*, sought out by the most brutish Degeneracy; to forsake the Worship of Him that made the Heavens and the Earth and

the Seas and all that in them is, to worship Wood and Stones graven by Art and Man's Device; and to *change the Glory of the incorruptible God, into Images made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things?* Or even in the Service and Worship of the True God, to forsake *that Method of Worship* which he himself has appointed; and set up any *Inventions of their own*, in the Place of what God has expressly commanded.

2dly, WITH regard to our Duty towards *Men*: Does not *Nature* plainly lead us to Righteousness and Truth, to Justice and Equity, to universal Charity and Good-Will towards each other? And is it not apparently the base *Invention* of a Heart which has laid aside all Humanity, that is, all true human *Nature*; to enrich itself by Fraud and Unrighteousness, by oppressing the Innocent and the Poor; or to exalt itself by Violence and Cruelty, and insulting over the Miseries of its fellow-Creatures?

Lastly, WITH regard to our Duty towards *Ourselves*: Are not the Appetites of *Nature*, reasonable and modest, regular and sober, peaceable and contented within their proper Limits? And is not plainly the *Invention* of an evil Heart, and of a wilfully degenerate and corrupted Spirit; to heighten unnatural Appetites by Art, to blow up disorderly Passions by obstinate Self-Will, and to indulge unreasonable Desires by habitual Opposition to right Reason and Religion?

IN all these Cases therefore 'tis manifestly true, that *God has made Man upright, but they themselves have sought out many Inventions. Inventions*, to corrupt by indirect Practices the Simplicity of Nature: And, when they have so done, *Inventions* to deceive themselves,

selves, by giving the Name of *Nature* to the *unnatural* Effects of evil Customs and Habits; and *Inventions* to lay themselves asleep in their Error and Deceit, by finding out numberless Ways of reconciling a *wicked Life* with the Hopes and with the Pretences of *Religion*.

THE Application of what has been said, may be very Brief. And,

1st, FROM what has been said, we may observe, that the Difficulty of obeying the Commandments of God, does not so much arise, generally speaking, from the Nature of our *Duty*, or from the Nature of *Man*; as from the Temptations of the *World*, and from the *Custom* of Sinning. To Idolatry, Profaneness and Irreligion, there is *no Temptation in Nature*; but from the Wickedness of Men, *wilfully* deceiving one another, and being deceived. To Iniquity, Cruelty and Injustice, there is nothing in *human Nature* that prompts us; but the Vices are *inhumane* as much as unchristian, and the effects only of unreasonable indulged evil Habits. To Intemperance and Debauchery, there *are* indeed in many Persons strong Inclinations, that may seem *more Natural*, and to be more immediate Effects of Man's *original* Corruption; being a *Law in the Members*, warring against the *Law of the Mind*, and bringing Men into *Captivity to the Law of Sin* and Death. But even *these* Inclinations, are *Temptations* only, and not *Sins*; unless they be consented to and indulged in *unreasonable* and *unlawful* Instances; which God has given us the Use of Reason, and the Obligations of Religion, on purpose to restrain. If therefore it be *natural* to Man to be a *reasonable* Creature, 'tis *natural* to him also to be *Religious*; Religion

gion being nothing else but the highest Reason, and the keeping our Passions subject and obedient to its Laws. Wherefore when St Paul affirms, *Eph. ii. 3.* that *we all were by NATURE children of wrath*; 'tis a very great Abuse of Scripture, to understand him as if he had said, that *we were CREATED children of wrath*. For the *Nature* the Apostle there speaks of, is not *that Nature* wherein God created us, but *that second Nature* of evil Habits, which wicked Men bring upon themselves by *Custom* in Sinning; *that Nature*, which we usually mean even in common Speech, when we say 'tis the *Nature* of a profane or vitious Man, to act profanely or vitiously. For so are the Apostle's *express Words*: *We were by Nature*, saith he, *the Children of Wrath, even as Others*; because *among them WE also had our Conversation in Times past, in the Lusts of our Flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh and of the Mind*: Speaking of Christians, converted from Heathen Wickedness and Idolatry.

AND *this shews, in what manner also are to be understood such Texts as these which follow.* *Behold, I was SHAPEN in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother CONCEIVE me*, Psalm li. 5. *The Wicked are estranged from the WOMB, they go astray as soon as they are BORN, speaking lies*, Psalm lviii. 3. *I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a Transgressor from the WOMB*, Isaiah xlviii. 8. *They were a naughty Generation, and their Malice was BRED in them, and their Cogitation would NEVER be changed*, Wisd. xii. 10. The Meaning of all these Texts is, not that Men were really Wicked by necessity of *Nature*; but 'tis a Complaint of them, that they were *so wicked and corrupt,*

corrupt, *as if*, speaking by way of Similitude, it had been *bred* even in their very *Nature*. But that it is not so meant *literally*, appears from hence, that on the contrary, the same manner of speaking is used concerning *good Men* also. *Job xxxi. 18*, describing his own charitableness to the Poor, he saith; *from my YOUTH, he (the Poor) was brought up with me; and I have guided her (the Widow) from my Mother's WOMB*. And *Ecclus. i. 14*, describing very righteous Men, he saith; *To fear the Lord, is the Beginning of Wisdom; and it was created with the Faithful in the WOMB*. The Meaning is; such Persons are as just and righteous, as if Virtue (comparatively speaking) had not been a Matter of *Choice*, but as if it had really been a Part even of their *Nature itself*.

2dly, FROM what has been said, we may see the Reason of the *Manner* of our Saviour's Admonition to his Disciples; when, taking up a *young Child* in his Arms, and recommending its *natural* Simplicity, Humility and Innocence; he told them, that *except they were converted and became as little Children, they should not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; for that *of such was the Kingdom of God*. And St Paul makes use of the same Similitude, *1 Cor. xiv. 20*. *In Understanding*, saith he, *be Men*, but *in Malice be ye Children*; that is, be ye like to those who have not yet sought out any evil *Inventions*.

3dly, WE may from hence observe, how great the *Sin* of those is, who by ill Advice, or bad Example, corrupt the Minds of *Children*, or of *Men*. This is, in the highest Degree, being like unto *Satan*, the great Tempter and Destroyer of Mankind.

And

And if *they* shall severely be punished, who *comply* with those Temptations which rob them of their *own* Innocency, and destroy that *Uprightness* wherein God had created them; of how much *forer* Punishment shall *Those* be thought worthy, who industriously labour in teaching Others also to seek out evil *Inventions*.

S E R M O N X V.

Preach'd in the

P A R I S H - C H U R C H

O F

St JAMES's WESTMINSTER,

On Sunday, Dec. 29, 1723.

R O M. ix. 23, 24.

And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory: Even Us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

TH E R E is no Part of the whole New Testament, of greater difficulty to be understood; or which has been more misapplied by the Ignorant, more wrested by the Learned, and more falsely interpreted by the melancholy pious Person; than this 9th Chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. In which Chapter, whilst some have greatly perplexed themselves by picking out some of the middle

dle Verses of it; concerning God's electing the *Children which were yet unborn*, and had neither done good nor evil; concerning his loving *Jacob*, and hating *Esau*; concerning his *hardning Pharaoh*; and *shewing Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and having Compassion on whom he will have Compassion*; and concerning his having the same Power over Mankind, as the *Potter* has over the *Clay*, to make one Vessel to Honour, and another to Dishonour: Whilst some, I say, have greatly perplexed themselves by picking out some of these Particulars singly; 'tis yet nevertheless very evident, both from the *Apostle's Introduction* of his Discourse at the *Beginning* of the Chapter, and from his *Conclusion* and summing up of his Argument at the *End*; that the Design of the *Whole*, is not at all to speak concerning any Decree of God, with Respect to the *final* and *eternal* State of *particular Persons*; but only to declare both the sovereign Power and the Justice of God, in distributing to *different Nations* in divers Ages *what different Advantages* he pleases; and revealing his Will to them at *what Times* and in *what Manner* he thinks fit. As, in that great Instance of his rejecting the *Jews*, and calling in the *Gentiles*. Which, at the *Beginning* of the Chapter, the *Apostle* expressly declares to be the Aim and Intention of his Discourse: And at the *End* he sums it up, as the *Conclusion* designed: And all the *intermediate* Parts of it, and the Examples therein alledged, are plainly nothing but *Similitudes* and *Illustrations* of this Argument.

THE Words of the Text itself, are as clear a Declaration of this whole Matter, as can be desired. *That he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory;*

Glory ; even US whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Here the Apostle clearly and expressly declares, that by the *Vessels of Mercy*, prepared afore of God unto *Glory*, (of whom he had been treating in the fore-going Part of the Chapter,) he does not mean *particular Persons* chosen unconditionally to *eternal Salvation* ; but the *whole Body* of Christians, even *Us whom he has called*, (and who have obeyed that Call by believing in Christ,) not from among *the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles : Called*, to receive that Grace and Mercy, and to embrace those Advantages of the *Gospel* ; by rejecting of which, the *Jews* became *Vessels of Wrath* fitted to destruction. And *We*, in like manner, notwithstanding our being at present the *Vessels of Mercy*, yet, if *we live unworthy* of the same Advantages, the Apostle bids us beware, lest, since God spared not the *Jews*, the natural Branches ; much more he also spare not *Us*, who were but ingrafted after *their* Fall.

BUT, to enter into a more full and particular Explication of the Apostle's *whole* Discourse. In the *foregoing Part* of this Epistle, he had shown at large, *that the Gentiles*, by corrupting themselves contrary to the Law of *Nature*, (*ch. i.*) and the *Jews* by disobeying the Law given them from *Heaven*, (*ch. ii.*) were *Both of them* become equally liable to the Wrath of God : For that, God being no Respector of Persons, *as many as have sinned without the Law, shall perish without the Law ; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law*, *ch. ii. ver. 12.*

THAT therefore the Insufficiency of *Both* these Laws, either to preserve Men from Sin, or to furnish
Y them

them with sufficient Means of Reconciliation after Sin; I say, the insufficiency of *Both* these Laws, evidently appearing; consequently both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were obliged to believe in *Christ*; embracing and obeying the *grace* or *gracious Terms* of the Gospel, as the only Means of Justification for the future, (*cb. iii.*) *For since all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God, they can only be justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, v. 24.* That is; *All* being Sinners, they can none of them claim Salvation by the Merit of their Obedience, but merely through the gracious Pardon of Sin freely granted to Penitents thro' Faith in Christ.

T H A T this Justification by *Faith* without *Works*, that is, by the Obedience of the *Gospel alone*, (without the Ceremonies of the *Law*,) was abundantly sufficient; because it was *the same*, by which *Abraham* himself, the Father of the faithful, had been justified, (*cb. iv.*) *For the Promise was not to Abraham or to his Seed through the Law (the Mosaic Law,) but through the Righteousness of Faith, ver. 13.*

T H A T this Justification by the Faith and Obedience of the *Gospel*, affords much greater Assurance of present Peace and Reconciliation with God, and of eternal Life and Glory hereafter, than the *Law* could do, (*cb. v.*) *For if (saith he) when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; much more being now justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath thro' him, ver. 9.*

T H A T this free Justification by *Grace* through the Faith of the *Gospel*, without the Ceremonies of the *Mosaick* Institution, obliges Men to a stricter Obedience, to greater Purity and Holiness of Life, than

than the *Law* itself had done, (*cb. vi.*) Christians being now made free from Sin, and become the Servants of Righteousness; being dead unto Sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, verse 11 and 18.

THAT the Law of Moses, was by no Means able to deliver Men from the Bondage and Slavery of Sin; from forbearing to do the good they would, and from doing the evil they would not; from the Law in their Body, warring against the Law of their Mind, and bringing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death, (*ch. vii.*) But that the Gospel, having delivered Men from the Body of this Death, from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God; enabled them to prevail, not only over the Temptations of Sin within themselves, but also over all the Persecutions and all the Powers of the World, (*cb. viii.*) For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death. And now, Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us, verse 2 and 35.

THE Apostle, I say, having largely proved these several Particulars in the first Eight Chapters of this Epistle; proceeds in this Ninth Chapter to answer a great Prejudice and strong Objection, which he foresaw would be raised by the unbelieving Jews, against what he had hitherto been pleading for. For, if his Doctrine deliver'd in this Epistle was true, the Consequence was plain, that whosoever of the Jews rejected the Gospel; it would follow, notwithstanding

their being descended from the *Patriarchs*, to whom all the *Promises* were made; notwithstanding their being the *peculiar People* of God; notwithstanding that to them were committed the *Prophecies* and *Oracles* of God; notwithstanding that to them pertained the *Adoption*, and the *Glory*, and the *Covenants*, and the giving of the *Law*, and the *Service* of God, and the *Promises*; it would follow, that they were still nevertheless out of the *Way* of *Salvation*, in the most zealous Observance of the ceremonial *Righteousness* of the *Law*; unless they believed in *Christ*, and obeyed the *Gospel*, which is the *Righteousness* of *Faith*. This the *Jews* thought to be an impossible Doctrine, and contrary to the *Promises* of God made to their *Fathers* the *Patriarchs*; and that therefore it was only an effect of the *Apostle's Zeal* and *Prejudice* against them, since his forsaking them, and being converted to *Christianity*. To this objection therefore he replies at large, in this *Ninth* Chapter; by showing that there was no *Injustice* in God, no breach of *Promise*, no change of his *Will*, in rejecting the unbelieving *Jews*, and receiving in the *Gentiles*; since even originally the *Promise* was not made to *All* the *Children* of *Abraham*, but to *Isaac* only; and not to *Both* the *Sons* of *Isaac*, but to *Jacob* only: And, of the *Posterity* of *Jacob*, *All* were not *Israel*, which were of *Israel*; but, in *Elijah's* Days, seven thousand only were the true *Israel*; and, in the time of *Isaiah*, though the number of the *Children* of *Israel* was as the *Sand* of the *Sea*, yet a remnant only was to be saved; And, during the whole Period of the *Law*, God had mercy on whom he would have Mercy, and Compassion on whom he would have Compassion; That is, not on the whole people promiscuously, but on whom

be himself pleased, who was the *Alone* competent Judge, and who *Alone* could infallibly distinguish such as were truly stedfast in their *Faith* or *Fidelity* towards him: And *whom he would, be hardened*; that is, out of obstinate and incorrigible Offenders, he chose whom he pleased, to make remarkable Examples of his Wrath and Vengeance. Since this, saith the Apostle, was the Case *Originally*, and the Method of God's proceeding *all along*: much more at the coming of the *Messias* into the World, who was the End of the Law, might God justly reject and cast off the Unbelievers; and reckon Those only the true children of *Abram*, who imitated the Faith and Obedience of that great Father of the Faithful: *Making known the riches of his glory*, as the Text expresses it, *on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory*; Even *US* whom he has called, not of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*.

THIS being premised *in general*, and the principal force of the Apostle's Argument explained; the several *Particulars* of his discourse in this chapter, which have often been so widely mistaken and so strangely misapplied, may without much difficulty be understood. In the *first five verses* he begins with an *Apology* for himself, that, in this whole doctrine concerning the rejection of the *Jews*, he was not at all influenced by any *Prejudice* or *Hatred* he had contracted against his Countrymen since his conversion to Christianity. So far from *that*, that on the contrary he calls God to witness in the most solemn manner, that his grief and trouble of Mind for their Impenitency and Incredulity, and for their consequent rejection, and the judgments God would send upon them; was much greater and more uneasy to him, than all the

other afflictions and calamities he met with in the World. *I say the Truth in Christ* (says he,) *I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my Heart; For I could wish that MY SELF were accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh.* The expression is highly figurative and affectionate. And melancholy pious persons have sometimes been disturbed at it; as if *St Paul's Wish* was an inimitable flight of Affection: Whose example herein, if a Christian can in *no case* follow, he may be apt to accuse himself of want of Charity; and yet to follow it in *any case*, seems terrible even to the strongest Affection, and shocking even to the most fervent Zeal. For tho' for a good man, as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses himself, one would even dare to *die*; yet for a man, upon any possible account whatsoever, to be content to become subject to the *Curse of God*, and to his *final displeasure*; this seems beyond the utmost bounds even of Christian Charity itself, either to desire, or to be ever capable of being prevailed with to submit to. 'Tis certain therefore, that the Meaning of the Apostle has been misunderstood; and that his intention in this passage, was not to wish himself subject to the *eternal wrath of God*, (which is absurd and impossible;) But, the wishing himself *accursed from Christ* for the sake of his own Nation and People, is to wish, that, if it were possible, he, by bearing *himself* those temporal judgments, which he saw were coming upon *Them* on account of their being *accursed from Christ* through their obstinacy and incredulity, might restore them again to the Favour of God, and reinstate them in the Privileges of his *peculiar people*. *I could wish that MY*
SELF

SELF were accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the Flesh. So far (says he,) am I from bearing any hatred or ill-will to my own Nation the Jews, that on the contrary I could willingly suffer all the Calamities in the World in their stead, if thereby I could prevent their rejection, and their being accursed from Christ. And this high expression of his zeal and concern for his own Nation in the Beginning of his Discourse, is an undeniable Demonstration, that the whole Argument itself, which follows in this chapter, does not at all relate to any imaginary Predestination of Particular Persons to eternal Happiness or Misery; but that it wholly belongs to the rejection of the NATION of the Jews, for their Infidelity; and the calling in of the Gentiles, by the Gospel. For, in This Sense, his Apology for himself is very pertinent and apposite, and necessary to be premised in the Introduction of a Discourse, which he foresaw must needs be so extremely ungrateful to the whole Jewish Nation. But according to the Other Interpretation of the Apostle's Argument, there can no Sense at all be made of this Apology. For since predestinate or reprobate persons, if of such he were speaking, were selected irrespectively both from among Jews and Gentles; and, who the particular persons so selected were, could not at all be known in this life; it could not serve any imaginable purpose in such an Argument, to premise an Apology concerning his great heaviness and continual sorrow of Heart for the rejection of his own Nation and Countrymen, the whole people of the Jews.

THIS latter therefore, being plainly his true Scope and Design; he proceeds at the 6th verse to show, that there was no injustice, no breach of pro-

mise in God, in rejecting the unbelieving *Jews*, and receiving the *Gentiles* in their room; forasmuch as the very *original* Promise to their Father *Abraham*, by which they were first entitled to become God's peculiar people, was not made promiscuously to *all* his Posterity, but to the children of the promise, the seed of *Isaac* only. 'Which was from the Beginning a Type and plain Prefiguration, that God did not principally intend his promise, to take place in *Abraham's* Descendants according to the *Flesh*; but in those who by a *Faith* or *Fidelity* like his, were in a truer and higher Sense the children and Followers of that great Father of the Faithful. The Promise of God therefore is not at all made void by this new Dispensation: Nor can I in any wise be charged, says he, *as though I supposed the Word of God had taken none effect; For they are not All Israel, which are Of Israel; Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; But in Isaac shall thy seed be called; That is, They which are the children of the Flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise, are counted for the Seed, ver. 8.* So that, even according to the *Original* Intent of the promise made to *Abraham*, Christians of the *Gentiles* who imitated the Faith and moral Obedience of that Patriarch, were more truly his children, than his unbelieving *Posterity* according to the *Flesh*.

THE same Argument the Apostle further illustrates in the 10th verse, by a still more eminent Example. For, if, saith he, not only among the children of *Abraham*, but even among the Posterity of *Isaac* himself, (that Child of the Promise;) God was pleased to continue to make such a distinction, as to confine the Promise to *Jacob* in exclusion of *Esau*,

Esau, even *before* Either of them was born into the World: Much more may God *Now*, without injustice confine his promise to *such* only, who, after the Example of *Jacob*, believe in God, and obey his Will in what manner soever it be made known to them; Exclusive of those, who continue in their Unbelief, and obstinately reject that only means of Salvation which God hath proposed to them: Exclusive (I say) of these, notwithstanding that they be by descent the Posterity of *Jacob*, and in Other Respects equal to them that Believe. And this is the full meaning of the following Words, *v. 11. The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil; that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto Rebekah, The elder shall serve the younger; As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

THAT the Purpose of God, according to election, might stand. The only difficulty in this passage is, *What Purpose* of God the Apostle is here speaking of. Many have strongly imagined, that it is his Purpose of choosing some particular persons unconditionally to eternal Life, and others to eternal Destruction. But the Apostle gives not the least Hint of any such thing. On the contrary, he explains himself in express Words, that he means God's *Purpose of appointing the elder of Isaac's Sons to serve the younger*; And *This*, not so much in their *Persons*, as in their *national Posterity*: And therefore no Wonder, that God made *This Appointment before they were yet born*. And the *Use* or *Application* the Apostle makes of this Instance, is, to prevent an Objection of the unbelieving *Jews*; Who since they could not deny but, notwithstanding all
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the Promises made to *Abraham* and *Isaac*, yet God might in *This Sense*, without any injustice, hate and reject *Esau*; consequently they could not reasonably charge God with any unrighteousness, in rejecting in like manner the *unbelieving Jews* also *themselves*. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid*, ver. 14.

AND to the same Purpose he urges, in the following verses, the Instances of what God declared to *Moses*, and what he did to *Pharaoh*. If of old God declared to *Moses*, that he would have mercy on whom he would have mercy, and would have compassion on whom he would have compassion; that is, would have compassion on men in what manner and upon what conditions he himself judged fit, who is certainly the most proper and the Only unerring Judge: For the same reason Now also, says the Apostle, neither is it of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, to choose for himself in what Method God shall bring men to Salvation: (as the *unbelieving Jews* would do, by adhering obstinately to the ceremonial righteousness of the *Mosaick Law*;) But 'tis of God only, that sheweth Mercy; 'tis His part only, to appoint in what manner, to whom, and on what conditions, he will shew it. Even in *Humane* Judicatures, should an *unskilful Spectator* take upon him to find fault with the Sentence of an *Able and Upright Judge*, might not the Judge well express himself in this manner: *I will acquit, whom I see fit to acquit; and I will condemn, whom I see fit to condemn?* Meaning, not that he would do it arbitrarily; but that, as having Alone the most perfect Knowledge of the *Law* and of the *Fact*, his Sentence ought not to be questioned by *unskilful Spectators*.

AGAIN:

AGAIN: If of old God always reserved to himself a Liberty of choosing likewise out of incorrigible offenders, whom he thought fit, to make publick and eminent examples of his wrath and vengeance; as in the instance of *Pbaraob*, whom God hardned, (just in the same sense as He is said to have tempted *David*, when by his permission *Satan* tempted him, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. and 1 Chron. xxi, 1. God * hardned *Pbaraob*, I say,) not by making or decreeing him to be wicked, (God forbid;) but, being wicked and incorrigibly obstinate, God raised him up or supported him in his Power, and deferred destroying him, and by many tryals made both his obstinacy and his punishment remarkable and conspicuous to the World, that he might shew his Power on him, and that his Name might be declared throughout all the Earth. If thus in all Former times, says the Apostle, God always reserved to himself this Power of choosing from among incorrigible offenders, whom he pleased to make publick examples of his wrath; as in this instance of *Pbaraob*: for the same reason Now also, says he, neither is there any injustice in God, in choosing to make the impenitent and unbelieving *Jews*, (whom all his Judgments hitherto, and all his merciful

* Thus Deut. xxix. 4. When *Moses* intended to expostulate with the Israelites, and to reprove them in the severest manner, for their Wilful obstinacy and ingratitude; he thus expresses it: *Ye have seen all that the Lord did——: Yet the Lord hath not Given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, unto This day.* The Sense of these words of *Moses*, is exactly what at This day is vulgarly expressed by the term, *Graceless*.

and

and gracious invitations to embrace the Gospel, have only *bardned*, instead of bringing them to Repentance ; there is no injustice in God in making *Them* Examples of his Severity and Wrath, notwithstanding their being the Posterity of *Abraham* according to the *Flesh* ; at the same time that he resolves to have mercy upon as many of the *Gentiles*, as shall obey the Call by which he invites them to receive the Gospel.

HAVING thus cleared his main Argument, the Apostle proceeds in the 19th verse, to propose an *Objection*, which he foresaw the unbelieving *Jews* would make against the Doctrine he had been hitherto establishing. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his Will?* If God resolves to cast us off and destroy us, as he did *Pharaoh*; why doth he yet blame us, for being so rejected; for how can his Will be resisted? To this, He makes a twofold Answer. *First*, by way of general Caution, *ver. 20, 21*; And *secondly*, by a particular and direct Reply, *ver. 22*, and in the Words of the Text. *First*, by way of general Caution, he reproves the rashness of replying presumptuously against God, *ver. 20*; *Nay but, O man, Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the Clay, of the same lump to make one Vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?* That is; not that God could originally create one man unconditionally to eternal Life, and another on purpose for eternal Misery; for this, if it were *possible* (as 'tis infinitely *impossible*) to be true, would yet be nothing at all to the Apostle's Argument concerning the Whole Nation of *the Jews*: But the plain meaning is (as appears from the express application of these passages

passages in the xlvth of *Isaiab* and the xviiiith of *Jere-
miab*, from whence they are cited ;) that God has as
much *Power* and as much *Right*, to punish or reject
one Nation or people, and receive or exalt *another*, up-
on what terms *he himself judges* to be most fit and
reasonable; as the Potter has, to form and mould
his clay, first into one Shape, and then into another.
But *Secondly*, the Apostle answers further to the fore-
mentioned Objection, by a particular and direct Re-
ply; that the rejected Jews had no reason at all to
murmur against the Power and Will of God; for
that though it was indeed *his* absolute Will and un-
controulable Power, to punish them *when and in
what manner* he thought fit; yet it was *Their own*
obstinacy and impenitency only, that made them
liable to be so rejected and punished *at all*. Ver. 22,
*What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make
his Power known, endured WITH MUCH LONG-
SUFFERING the Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?*
The Words *with much long-suffering*, prove very
clearly, that even the rejected *Vessels of Wrath* them-
selves were not destroyed, till God had first long
waited even for *their* Repentance and Amendment;
which evidently shows, it was not *before* determined
to be impossible. And then he adds in the words of
the Text: *And that he might make known the Riches
of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had
before prepared unto Glory; Even US whom he has
called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*
The *Vessels of Mercy* therefore, are not particular
persons chosen irrespectively; but *Us* whom he has
called, that is, the *whole Body of Christians* in oppo-
sition to the *whole Nation* of the rejected unbelieving
Jews. Which is also further evident from the Ap-

plication he makes in the following verse, of the words of the Prophet : *And he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not my beloved : And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the Living God.* And still more clearly, if possible, from the manner of his Summing up the whole Argument, ver. 30 ; *What shall we say then ? that the Gentiles which followed not after Righteousness, have attained to Righteousness, even the Righteousness which is of Faith ; But Israel which followed after the law of Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness : Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by Faith, (that is, by embracing the Gospel,) but as it were by the Works of the Mosaick Law.* All which he goes on yet further to explain and illustrate, in the whole 10th and 11th Chapters following. Which are so plain, that they need no Interpretation.

FROM what has been said, we may draw the two following practical Observations.

1st, SUCH pious Persons, as are apt to be disturbed with melancholy apprehensions concerning their own State ; fearing, that after all their sincerest and most earnest endeavours to obey the Will of God by a life of Virtue and true Holiness, they may yet possibly not be of the number of those *Vessels of Mercy, whom he has afore prepared unto Glory* ; Such Persons, I say, may have their Doubts removed, by considering, that all those passages of Scripture, from which Some have earnestly endeavour'd to establish the Doctrine of absolute and unconditionate decrees, do upon a careful consideration appear to have been greatly misinterpreted ;

misinterpreted; and that by *the Vessels of Mercy*, whom God had afore prepared unto Glory, St Paul plainly means, not *particular Persons* chosen irrespectively out of the bulk of Mankind; but the *whole Body of Christians*, the universal Church of Christ, in opposition to the *whole People or Nation of the Jews*. The *Election* (the *chosen People*) have obtained it, and *the rest were blinded*.

2dly, ON the other hand, such as are apt to be Presumptuous, and think themselves secure in the bare Profession of Christianity; upon account of the *whole Body of Christians* being stiled in Scripture, *the elect, the election, Vessels of Mercy*, and the like: These ought to take Notice, that in like manner as St Paul, out of the prophet *Isaiab*, observes that when the *whole Nation* of the Jews were the chosen and peculiar people of God, yet out of Them a *Remnant* only were to be finally saved; So *Now* also, though the whole Body of Christians, upon account of God's gracious Offers of Mercy to them in Christ, are stiled in Scripture *the election of grace*; yet Those only who live *worthy* of so excellent a Profession, by the Practice of true Virtue, Righteousness and Holiness, shall finally be made partakers of the Benefit thereof. For, as Christ *chose*, (the word in the Original is, *elect*) twelve disciples, and yet one of them proved a Devil and the Son of Perdition; so, notwithstanding that *all Christians* are the *Vessels of Mercy, prepared of God afore unto Glory*; yet if any man *draws back*, he shall lose the Benefit of that Preparation; and God will no longer *have any Pleasure* in him; that is, he shall finally be rejected, and not be made partaker of the Salvation of the Gospel.

SERMON XVI.

Preach'd in the
PARISH CHURCH
OF
St JAMES's Westminster.

On Sunday, Feb. 2, 1723.

LUKE xvi. 12.

*And if ye have not been Faithful in That
which is Another man's, who shall give
you That which is your own?*

THESE words are the Conclusion of a Parable; in which our Lord shows us, that the Men of *This* world are generally more diligent, more skilful, and more true to their Own Interest, in the pursuit of their *worldly* Designs; than men who have the Knowledge of the *True Religion*, and of the Happiness of the *Life to come*, are in securing to themselves a Portion in That *eternal State*. And thence he exhorts his Disciples, to learn Wisdom in *this Particular*, even from *visious and corrupt*

men ; to learn, even from *Their Behaviour*, to make the best Improvement of the Advantages they have in their Hands ; and be as diligent in making Provision for the time to come, in Matters of *Eternal Concern*, as others are in *Temporal*. The case he puts by way of Similitude, is that of a *Steward* ; who having embezzled his Lord's Goods, and finding he should thereupon be removed from his Place, deliberates with himself what Course he had best to take for his future Subsistence. To *dig*, or earn his Bread by the Labour of his Hands, was what he had never been brought up to ; To *Beg*, he was ashamed. What he at last resolv'd upon, was to do at present some considerable Acts of Generosity to several of his Lord's Debtors ; that afterwards, when he came to be discharged from his Place, he might find some Support in the Returns of *Their Gratitude* : *Ver. 4, I am resolv'd what to do ; that, when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their Houses.* Accordingly, sending for his Lord's Debtors, he immediately *remits* to each of them a considerable Proportion of their Debt. Whether we are to suppose he did this *fraudulently*, in further Wrong to his Lord ; or whether he did it *with Justice*, out of his own present Substance ; is not material to the Intent of the Parable. What our Saviour *observes* upon it, is *This only* ; that his Lord commended him, *ver. 8, because he had done wisely* : He commended his *Worldly Wisdom*, in securing to himself Friends against the Day of Adversity. And the *Application* our Lord makes of it, is *This* : That, what All men, both just and unjust, acknowledge to be the great Instance of Wisdom in *Temporal Affairs* ; the making provision before-hand against a time of Necessity ; is really

much

much more so, with regard to things Eternal. But in fact, 'tis in this latter case much more rarely put in Practice : For the children of This World, says he, are in their generation wiser than the children of Light. This observation contains an affectionate Reproof of the Remissness of Christians, in not being sufficiently solicitous about their future and final Interest : And there is included in it an earnest Admonition to them, to learn from the example even of an unrighteous World, to be true to their Principles ; and to be as Wise in attending to their own Advantages, as worldly men are to Theirs. Learn, says he, even from the Similitude of the Unjust Steward, to lay up for yourselves a Treasure against the time to come, to secure to yourselves a Refuge against the day of Trial. Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness ; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations. He that is Faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your Trust the True Riches ? And if ye have not been faithful in That which is Another man's, who shall give you that which is your own ? There is some little Obscurity in the Words, arising from the manner of expression ; especially in that latter part of them, which are the words of my Text. But if we carefully consider their True Sense ; they will appear to contain the clearest Reasoning, and the strongest and most noble Argument in the World.

In the first place 'tis to be observed, that the words, *unrighteous mammon*, with which our Lord here exhorts his Disciples to make to themselves Friends, do not signify Riches **UNJUSTLY** gotten,
Riches

Riches which men have *no RIGHT at all to possess*; but which they have no *Lasting*, no *certain*, no *Secure* and *Permanent Right* to; no *Right of perpetuity of Enjoyment*. For they are expressly oppos'd, not as *unjust* or *ill-gotten*, to *just* or *well-gotten Riches*; but as *False* and *Deceitful*, they are here oppos'd to the *True Riches*; and as *insecure transitory Possessions*, to *Everlasting Habitations*.

IN the *Next* place 'tis to be observed, that the words, *He that is Faithful in that which is LEAST, is Faithful also in MUCH*; are a comparison between the *Present Life*, and the *Future*. *He*, and *He only*, who, in the State of *Tryal Here*, shows his *Fidelity* in a *Small Trust*; shall *Hereafter* have intrusted to him an unspeakably *Larger* and *more permanent Possession*. Thus our Lord explains himself in the Parable of the Talents, *Matt. xxv. 21*; *Well done, thou good and Faithful Servant; thou hast been Faithful over a Few things, I will make thee Ruler over Many things; Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*. Or as he expresses it in *Luke xix. 17*; *Well, thou good Servant; because thou hast been Faithful in a very Little, have thou Authority over Ten Cities*.

Lastly; 'Tis to be observ'd (which indeed is the principal difficulty in the Text;) that the words, *Who shall give you That which is your Own?* do not signify, That which is *Already* your own, but that which *is to be*; that which, when once given you, *WILL* be your own for a *Perpetual and Unalienable Possession*. If ye have not been *Faithful in that which is Another man's*, in that which you knew was *only a Trust* committed to you, and committed to you *only for a very short time*; how then can you be fit to be intrusted with a *Possession for Perpetuity*? If in a
matter

matter wherein you *knew* you must be called to *account*, and *knew not* every day but *the very next* might be the day of *accounting*, you have still ventured presumptuously to be Unfaithful; how are ye fit to be intrusted with *Power* and a *KINGDOM*, with *Power in your Own Property*, with a Possession *secure* and of *unchangeable Duration*.

THUS the *Sense* of our Lord in this whole Discourse is exceeding *clear*; and the Argument on which he builds his Admonition, *strong* and *affectionate*. Learn, says he, *one part of true Wisdom*, even from *worldly*, even from *unrighteous* men. The *unjust Steward* in the *Parable*, foreseeing he should not long possess his Stewardship, had Wisdom enough to make *some sort of Provision* for himself, against the Day of Adversity. Ye also, says our Lord, are *Stewards*, entrusted with a small treasure, for a very uncertain, but certainly very short Time. *This Treasure*, to which you have no *lasting Right*, no *continuing Title*; make to yourselves Friends with it, *Now*. Employ it in such a manner, in things innocent and virtuous, in ways just and righteous, in works useful and charitable; that *hereafter*, when this *transitory life* shall *fail*, ye may be found worthy to be *received into everlasting Habitations*. To obtain a Portion in those *everlasting Habitations*, there is no other possible way, but by being found faithful in this *Temporary Trial*. For *He that is Faithful in Little*, may reasonably be depended upon, that he will be *Faithful also in Much*; But *He that is Unjust in the Least thing*, can with no reason expect to be trusted with what is *Greater*. If *therefore*, says our Lord, *ye be not faithful in a Trust of so short continuance*, as the *present time* is; how are ye fit to have committed to you the *True and Eternal*

Eternal Riches? And if ye be not faithful in That which is Another's, and for which ye are accountable, every moment; how is it fit ye should be trusted with a permanent Treasure, a Treasure to continue in your own Power, in your own proper and unalienable Possession?

HAVING thus at large explained the words, and illustrated the *Argument* used by our Lord in the Text; it remains that I deduce from thence some *Doctrinal* Observations, which may be of Use to us in *Practice*. And

1st, 'Tis obvious to observe, that what our Lord here argues, both in the Parable and in the Application of it, with regard to the use of *Riches* in particular; is equally applicable, and intended to be applied, to *every other* Advantage or Ability whatsoever. *Authority, Honour, Power, Knowledge; every Opportunity in Life, of having Influence upon Men; may, as well as Riches, be either made use of to the Glory of God, and the promoting of Virtue; or may be abused to Other, and Contrary Purposes. The Ground of our Lord's Exhortation in the Text, is the Same with regard to All these things; and may, with equal Reason, be applied to them All. They are All of them, in the present Life, of very short; all of them, of equally uncertain continuance. They are all of them committed to us, as to Stewards during pleasure; all of them, what we are accountable for, every moment. What have we then to do, according to Any measures of Wisdom and Prudence; but to employ all these things faithfully to Such Purposes here in this transitory life, as may hereafter be a Foundation for our being received into everlasting Habitations?* For if, in the use of *Any* of these Abilities,

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we be not at present *Faithful* in *That which is Another's*; in *That which Now* for a *short* time only, is committed to us upon *Trust*, and upon *Account*, from *Another*: How can we reasonably expect to have them hereafter *given* to us for *Our Own*, for an unalienable and everlasting Possession.

2dly, A SECOND doctrinal Observation arising from our Saviour's Argument in the Text, is; that the *present life* is a *Trial* of mens *Fidelity*, a *Probation* of their *Fitness* for a *future and more lasting State*. He that is *faithful* in *that which is Least*, is *Faithful* also in *Much*; and He that is *unjust* in the *Least*, is *unjust* also in *Much*. If therefore, (says he) ye be not *Faithful* in a *Temporary Trust*, *Who* shall think fit to give you an *Eternal Inheritance*? What *Moses* said to the *Israelites* concerning their *Passage* through the *Wilderness* to the *Promised Land*, *Deut. viii. 2*; is exactly parallel to the present case. *Tbou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the Wilderness*, to *humble thee*, and to *PROVE thee*, to *KNOW* what was in *thine heart*, whether thou wouldst keep his *Commandments*, or no. The meaning is; not, that *God* wants *information*, or tries men with regard to *Himself*, who knoweth all things: But with regard to *Them*, he proves and exercises their *Virtue*; the *Habits* of which, essentially and in the *Nature* of things, are *produced* and *improved* no otherwise than by *Acts*. In the *Fabrick* of the *Natural* and *Material* World, every thing is, by the *Necessity* of its *Nature*, exactly and invariably what the *Creator* made it: Nor can any of *These things* possibly, by *Any Power* of *Nature*, either *improve* or *destroy* their own originally implanted *Perfections*. But in the *Moral* world, of intelligent
and

and rational Creatures ; the Case is just the *Reverse*. The very *Effence* of *Virtue* consists, in being *freely chosen*. And had not God so constituted *Moral Agents*, as to make *Their* Goodness or Badness depend upon the *Habits* they should acquire by their *own free Acts* ; he had in the very Act of Creation destroyed his own Design, and had not made them at all *Moral Agents*. Consequently, (which is the *Noblest* Part of the Idea of God,) he had neither been *King* nor *Judge* nor *Governour* of the World, but merely as an *Artificer* of a *Great Machine*. A *Machine* ; in the *Fabrick* of which, he *has* indeed displayed, by an infinite variety of the most surprising Effects, *Wisdom unsathomable*, and *Power inexhaustible*. But 'tis all merely for the sake of the *Inhabitants*, whom he has placed therein, capable of contemplating this divine Workmanship. For otherwise, the whole *Fabrick* of the Earth and Heavens ; beautiful, great, and glorious as it is ; is yet *in itself*, (being lifeless, void of all Sense and Knowledge, and not so much as Conscious of its own Existence,) less valuable than the meanest single Animal in the Universe. And *together with* an infinite variety of creatures indued merely with *life, sense, and motion* ; 'tis still comparatively as Nothing ; 'tis still really of less Value, than *One Rational, Intelligent, Free, Moral Agent*, capable of *Contemplating* and *Acknowledging*, capable of *Imitating*, in its *degree and measure*, the Perfections of its Great Creator. For the Sake of *These* therefore, the World was created. And *These* God cannot but govern in ways suitable to *Their* nature, as he governs the *material* World in a way suitable to *Its* nature. *These* he cannot but dispose into different Stations, proportionable to their *Moral Capacities* and Improvements ;

Improvements ; in like manner as, in the *Natural World*, he has adjusted every thing in *Weight and Measure*. In the *One*, appears the Skill and Wisdom of an All-powerful *Artificer* ; In the *Other alone*, appears the Glory and Majesty of a Supreme *King*, and the Righteousness of an All-seeing and unerring *Judge*. This is the manifest Voice of *Nature and Reason* ; and This is the express and constant Declaration of *Scripture*. All sorts of *Abilities, Powers, and Capacities* whatsoever, wherewith God has at present indued men ; *Riches, Honour, Authority, Wisdom, Knowledge*, and the like ; are by our Saviour, in his Parable of the *Talents*, represented as so many particular *Trusts*, committed to mens Charge in This World ; as *Tryals* of their *Fidelity*, in way of *Probation* of their *Fitness* for a *Better* and more *Lasting* State. They who employ not these *Abilities* to *Virtuous* Purposes, in promoting *Truth and Righteousness* in the World ; are the *wicked and slothful Servant*, to whom his Lord said, *Thou oughtest to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with Usury : Take therefore the Talent from him ; — — — and cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth*, Matt. xxv. 27. On the contrary : They who, according to their respective *Abilities*, employ the different *Powers* (whatsoever they be) wherewith God has intrusted them, in promoting the *Glory of God*, and the *Practice of Virtue* in the World ; These are the *Servants*, who, in trading with *five talents*, having gained *five more* ; and with *two talents*, having gained *Other two* ; their Lord said to each of them in his Proportion ; *Well done, thou good and faithful Ser-*

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vant ;

want ; Thou hast been Faithful over a Few things, I will make thee Ruler over Many things : Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord. In the language of my Text: *Thou hast been Faithful in That which is Another man's*, in That small and short Trust which I committed to thy Charge ; I will now therefore give thee a Possession, which shall be in Property thy Own, thy Own for an unalienable and everlasting Inheritance. In the xxivth ch. of St Matthew, ver. 42. our Lord expresses the same thing still more strongly: *Watch therefore*, says he, and—*be Ye also ready ; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh*. Who then is a faithful and wise Servant, whom his Lord has made Ruler over his Household, to give them Meat in due Season ? Blessed is That Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing: Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him Ruler over All his Goods. 'Tis in allusion to This Notion, of the present life being a Tryal of mens Fidelity, or of their Fitness for a better State ; that St Paul, when the End of his days drew near, declares concerning himself, 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good fight,—I have kept the Faith ;* (I have preserved my Fidelity, or shown my self Faithful in my Trust :) Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness. And in the former Part of his Life, describing his Care, in the Government of himself and of his own Passions, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my Body*, says he, *and bring it into Subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to Others, I myself should be a Cast-away*: in the Original it is, *I myself should be ἀδόκιμος*] found Not proof ; not proof against the Temptations of the present World ; not meet for the USE, for the Employment, for the Station

Station intended me in the Life to come. For, (as he in another place expresses this matter by a most apt similitude;) in a great House, there are, says he, not only Vessels of Gold and of Silver, but also of Wood and of Earth; and some to Honour, and some to Dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from These, (from ungodly Works and Doctrines mentioned in the former part of the chapter;) he shall be a Vessel unto Honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's Use, and prepared unto every good Work.

THE Principal method, in which the unsearchable Wisdom of God has most frequently been pleased to Try the Fidelity of his Best and most eminent Servants, has been by Afflictions and Persecutions of various kinds: Proving them, whether in case of Competition, they would stedfastly prefer the Interest of Truth and Virtue, in opposition to all the Advantages, and to all the Sufferings too, of this present Life. Whosoever (says our Lord) does not bear his Cross, and come after me; cannot be my Disciple, Luke xiv. 27. And hence it is, that in Scripture we so frequently find the Tryal of mens Fidelity, compared to the purifying and Trying of Metals by Fire. Many shall be purified and made white, and tried, Dan. xii. 10. And they that understand among the People, shall instruct many; * yet they shall fall by the Sword and by Flames, by Captivity and by Spoil: — And Some of them of Understanding shall fall, to Try them, and to purge, and to make them white. Thus again, Isaiah lxviii. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with Silver; I have chosen thee in the Furnace of Affliction. † I will refine them, as Silver is refined; and will try them, as Gold is tried.

* Daniel xi. 33.

† Zech. xiii. 9.

And Job xxiii. 10. *He knoweth the Way way that I take : When he has tried me, I shall come forth as Gold.* The Later Writers of the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*, apply the same similitude with great usefulness of Thought, and eloquence of Expression. * *Gold is tried in the Fire, and Acceptable men in the Furnace of Adversity. The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no Torment touch them. † Having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded ; for God PROVED them, and found them worthy for Himself. As Gold in the Furnace has been Tried them, and received them as a Burnt-Offering.* In the New Testament, the same figure of speaking, is continued in the same Sense. Our Saviour, in his Exhortation to the Christian Church in *That Period of time*, which is represented by the Church of *Smyrna* : *Behold, (says he,) the Devil, (the Spirit of False Accusation) shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be TRIED : Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life, Rev. ii. 10.* And at another time : *Because (says he) thou hast kept the word of my Patience, § I also will keep Thee from (or carry thee safely through) the Hour of Temptation, which shall come upon all the World, to TRY them that dwell upon the Earth.—Him that overcometh, (that is, who shall be found Faithful in that Hour of Tryal, notwithstanding all the Allurements and all the Terrors of an unrighteous World ; Him) will I make a PILLAR in the Temple of my God ; A PILLAR, or Eminent Part, of That Living Temple of God, of which the Twelve Apostles are (by a most beautiful and expressive metaphor) represented as being the*

* *Ecclus. ii. 5.* † *Wisd. iii. 5.* § *Rev. iii. 10.*
twelve

* twelve *Foundation-Stones*, or † *Rocks* on which it is built; and *Jesus Christ* himself the *chief corner-stone*, by which the *Whole Building* is compact together. With a View to These and the like Promises it is, that St. *James* declares: † *Blessed is the man that endureth Temptation; for when he is TRYED, he shall receive the Crown of life.* And St *Peter*: || *That the TRYAL* (saith he) *of your Faith, (of your Fidelity or Faithfulness,) being much more precious than of Gold that perisheth, though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

3dly, A THIRD doctrinal Observation, obviously arising from the foregoing, and of great Use in Practice; is This. If the *present life* is a *Tryal* of mens *Fidelity*, a *Probation* of their *Fitness* for a *Future* and *more Lasting State*; then every *erroneous Notion*, which is of such a nature, as leads men to rely upon *Any Equivalent* whatsoever, instead of employing *faithfully* those *Talents*, wherewith God has intrusted them, in promoting his *Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness*; must needs be a *Fatal Deteit*. If men content themselves barely with a *zealous Profession* of the *true Religion*, and a diligent avoiding of all *false Opinions* in *Speculation*: If they rely entirely upon a regular Observance of those merely *External Duties* of Religion, which were appointed of God as *Obligations* and *Assistances* to *True Virtue*: If they satisfy themselves with that *Sorrow for Sin*, and *Fear of Punishment* upon the Approach of *Eternity*, which is vulgarly called a *Death-bed-Repentance*: If they depend upon any *absolute Decree* of God, or upon any application of

* Rev. xxi. 14, † Matt. xvi. 18. † James i. 12.
|| 1 Peter i. 7.

the *Merits* of *Christ*, to save them, not *from*, but *in* their *Sins*: If they expect to be saved by their *Faith*, meaning thereby mere *Credulity*, instead of *Fidelity* or *acting Faithfully* upon the Principles they profess: In these and all other Cases whatsoever, which can possibly be reconciled with *vitious* and *immoral* Practice; our Saviour will say unto them, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*. For if ye have not been *Faithful* in a small and temporary *Trust*, how is it fit I should give you a *Kingdom* to be *your Own* for ever?

4thly and *Lastly*: FROM what has been said, it appears, that the principal *Difference* of men, in *God's* estimation, consists not so much in the *Number* of the *Talents* committed to them, as in the *Degree* of their *Fidelity*, or the *Good Use* they make of them. For, *Many that are First shall be Last, and the Last First*. And to *Him* who with *Ten Talents* gained *other Ten*, our Lord says; "Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord: For he that is Faithful in *Little*, is Faithful also in *Much*: Wherefore since thou hast been Faithful in that which is *Another man's*, in That short and small *Trust* which I committed to thy charge; I will therefore give thee a *Treasure* and *Inheritance* which shall be *thine Own*, *thine Own* for an *unalienable* and *everlasting Possession*."

SERMON XVII.

Preach'd in the
PARISH CHURCH
OF

St JAMES's Westminster,

On Sunday, Feb. 16, 1723.

LUKE xvii. 37.

And they answered and said unto him: Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the Body is, thither will the Eagles be gathered together.

THESE words are a Proverbial Saying, used by our Lord upon two different Occasions. Once in *This place*, upon occasion of the Pharisees demanding of him, *ver. 20, WHEN the Kingdom of God should come.* And again in the 24th of St Matthew, upon occasion of his Disciples asking him, *WHEN shall these Things be? and What shall be the Sign of thy coming and of the End of the World?* In this Latter place, our Lord, in answer to the
Question

Question put to him by his Disciples, gives them a large Prophetick Description of the destruction of the City and Nation of the *Jews*, by the Power of the *Romans*; and a long Series of *Other Events*, which were to be accomplished before his coming to Judgment. And because he is very particular and distinct in *That Part* of the Prophecy, which relates to the destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*, whose Armies carried an *Eagle* for their Ensign; therefore the Generality of Expositors have understood the Meaning of the words of my Text to be, that *wheresoever the Jews were, thither would the Roman Armies be gathered together* to destroy them. But *This Sense* of the words seems *low*; and the *Allusion* to be *far-fetched*; and the *Application* of them, too much *confined*; and their *Connexion* in the whole Discourse, very difficult to be made out. For our Lord, in the Place where these words come in St Matthew's Gospel, as well as in That of St Luke, is not speaking of the *Romans* destroying the *Jews*; (for, *That Part* of his Prophecy he had finished, several verses before :) But he is speaking, in *One* of these places, concerning the unreasonableness of *looking for Christ's Coming* in *Any particular Part* of the World, in the *Desert*, or in the *Secret Chambers*, or in *Any One Place* rather than another. And in the *Other* place, he is speaking concerning the *righteous Judgment* of God, *distinguishing* persons from each other in the *Highest degree*, between whom in all *Worldly Appearance* there was *No Distinction*. The true Sense therefore of the words of the Text, must be gathered, not from any *remote Allusion* in the single word, *Eagles*; but from the *immediate Connexion* of the intire Sentence, in the Discourse wherein it is joined; and from the *natural Signification*

nification of the whole *Proverbial Saying*, considered as *Proverbial*.

THERE are several Instances in Scripture, of *Other Proverbial Sayings*, inserted in like manner as This in the Text ; very usual at the *Time*, and in the *Language*, wherein they were spoken ; so as to be as easily and as perfectly understood by the *Vulgar*, as the most *literal Expressions* whatsoever. Thus *Ezek. xviii.*
2. The Fathers have eaten Sower Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on Edge: There was no man among the *Jews*, even of the meanest capacity, but at first Hearing understood those words to mean, that *the Children were punished for the Transgression of their Fore-fathers*. Thus when St Paul tells us, that *Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap*, Gal. vi. 7: Every even the lowest Understanding immediately apprehends them to mean, that, according to mens behaviour Here, whether virtuous or vicious, so shall their Reward be, or their Punishment, hereafter. Again: When our Lord says, *Matt. vii. 16. Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles*; his Sense is no less obvious, and his Words even more expressive, than if he had said directly, that *Virtuous Actions cannot reasonably be expected to flow from Corrupt Principles, or from vicious and debauched Minds*. The *Proverbial Expression* in my Text, being founded upon a Similitude less Common in our Modern Language, than These before-mentioned ; the Sense of it, for That reason, does not to an *English Reader*, at first Sight, appear so obvious. But with a little Attention to the general Nature of *Proverbial Sayings*, it is very easy to be understood. The Nature of a *Proverb* is, to contain in one single Sentence a Similitude, or Comparison of Two Things with each other ;

other; and, under the Instance of some *one particular Example*, to conclude some *more general or Universal Truth*. This is evidently the Case, in the *Other Instances* I produced: And so it is likewise in *This Expression* in my Text. *Wheresoever the Body is, thither will the Eagles be gathered together. Wheresoever the Prey is, thither will the BIRDS of Prey flock towards it. Wheresoever the Case is the same, (whatsoever be the Subject spoken of;) there also the general Observation upon the Case, (whatsoever That Observation be,) will have the same Justness and Truth. Wheresoever the State of things is the same, and the Circumstances alike; there also will the Event, in Any Place, or at Any Time, be proportionally alike.*

THIS is plainly the *Sense* of the words, as it arises from the Consideration of the *General nature* of a *Proverbial Expression*. And from the consideration of the *Particular connexion* of the words with those immediately foregoing, in *Each* of the Passages in the *Two Gospels* where the *same words* occur; it still *more evidently* appears to be the *True Sense* of them. In the xxivth chapter of *St Matthew's Gospel*, (and the same thing is recorded likewise in the xiiiith of *St Mark*, and in the xxiith of *St Luke*;) the disciples had asked our Lord, * *WHEN shall these things be? When shall all these things come to pass, which thou hast so often foretold to us? And What shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World?* The *Ground* of their Question was; that, upon the dissolution of the *Jewish State and Government*, which he had told them was approaching; they expected the *Kingdom of Christ* should immediately be set up, in some remarkable *Maneur*, in some par-

* Matthew xxiv. 3.

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*sicular Place. In Answer to their Question, and in order to rectify this their mistake; our Lord tells them, that not only the City and Temple of Jerusalem should be destroyed, and the Jewish Nation dispersed; but that after This, there should still succeed a long Train of Calamities, and * the End should not be yet. For † Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And, during That long Period of time, in Orber parts of the World likewise, § Nation should rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; and there should be Famines and Pestilences and Earibquakes in divers places. And that even all These calamities, comparatively speaking, should be but the Beginning of Sorrows. For, a Deluge of Corruption and Iniquity should overspread the World. And there should be very great and very long Persecutions: ‡ And a time of || Tribulation, such as had not been since the beginning of the World. And that, during this time, the Gospel should § be preached in all the World, for a Witness unto all Nations. And his Conclusion of the Whole, is: That therefore his Disciples ought not to look for the Kingdom of Cbrist, as a Dominion to be set up at any particular Time or Place: But in all times, and at all places alike, wheresoever and whensoever the Doctrine of Christ is received and practised, wheresoever and whensoever any number of sincere Believers (whether Many or Few) be gathered together in His Name, There (says he) is the Kingdom of Christ. ver. 23, If any man shall say unto you, Lo, Here is Cbrist, or There; believe it not. For there shall arise False Christs and False Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders.—Behold, I have*

* Mark xiii. 7. † Luke xxi. 24. § Matt. xxiv. 7. || ver 12. ‡ ver 9, 10. § ver. 14, 21.

told

told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the Desert, go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the Lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the Carcase is, there will the Eagles be gathered together. The Sense evidently is This. As, in all Places equally, and at all Times, wheresoever the Lightning is, There does the Light of it shine forth; and wheresoever the Prey is, thither do the Birds of Prey resort: So, at what Time or Place soever the Doctrine of Christ is received, and practised according to His Directions, There is the Kingdom of Christ.

IN the Other passage, where the same words are again repeated, (which is, Luke xvii. 37, the words of my Text;) there likewise their connexion in the Thread of our Lord's Discourse, clearly shows them to have the Like signification. The Manner in which they are There introduced, is This, ver. 20; And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, WHEN the Kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said: The Kingdom of God cometh not with Observation. Neither shall they say, Lo Here, or Lo There: For, behold, the Kingdom of God is Within (or Among) you. And he said unto his Disciples; The days will come, when—they shall say unto you, See here; or see there; Go not after them, nor follow them. That is: Think not that the Kingdom of Christ is to be distinguished under the Character of any particular Time or Place, or to be known by any External Notes or Marks; but understand that it is in all Places and at all Times the same; distinguished always and every where alike, by its own intrinsic essence only; just as
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the Shining of *Lightning* is one and the same, from one end of Heaven to the other. After which he proceeds to warn them, *ver. 26* ; that as, in the days of *Noah*, and in the days of *Lot*, men were negligent and secure, having their Thoughts entirely taken up with their present Business ; their Ambition, their Covetousness, and their Pleasures ; till, on a sudden, the *Deluge of Water* swept them all away in the one case ; and *Lightning from Heaven*, joined with an *Earthquake*, destroyed and consumed them in the other case : *Even thus* (says he) *shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*. And then he concludes, in the words preceeding my Text, *ver. 34*. *I tell you in That Night there shall be two men in One Bed ; the One shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the Field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.* The Meaning is : In the *righteous* and unerring Judgment of God the Searcher of Hearts, many persons shall finally be distinguished from each other in the *Highest Degree*, between whom in all *Worldly Appearance* there was *No distinction*. * *And they said unto him, Where, Lord ? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the Body is, thither will the Eagles be gathered together.* That is to say : Your Question is of No Moment : 'Tis all one, *wheresoever* and *whenssoever* the same thing comes to pass. Difference of Time and Place, makes no difference at all in God's account and estimation, either of Things or Persons. Where-ever the Case is the same, and the *Circumstances* alike ; there also will the *Event* be proportionably the Same. At what Times and in what Places soever, the Persons to be

* Luke xvii. 37.

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judged

judged shall be found endued with the like diversity of Qualifications; *there also shall the impartial and unerring Judgment of God the Searcher of Hearts, distinguish them with the like Distinction.* **Watch ye therefore* (says our Lord) *and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.* † *And what I say unto You, I say unto All; Watch.*

HAVING thus fully and at large explained the true Signification of the words of the Text: The Observations I shall draw from thence, are briefly as follows.

1st, THAT generally speaking, *All the Admonitions and Instructions* given by our Saviour to his Disciples at different Times and upon different Occasions, were intended by him to be applied (allowing for particular differences of Circumstances) to *All Christians at all times and in all places.* Concerning things recorded in the *Old Testament*, even from the remotest times, St Paul declares, that *Whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for Our learning; that We, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope,* Rom. xv. 4. When the Scripture tells us, that *Abraham's Faith* was imputed to him for *Righteousness*, Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 22. *It was not written* (says the Apostle) *for His sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for Us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead:* That is, if *We* act with the same Fidelity upon the Principles of Our Profession, as *He* did upon *His*. On the other hand, when we find recorded in Scripture the severe Punishments inflicted upon the Children of *Israel* in

* Luke xxi. 36.

† Mark xiii. 37.

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the Wilderness, for their repeated Acts of Disobedience ; *All these things* (says he) *happened unto Them for Examples*, 1 Cor. x. 11 ; and *they are written for Our Admonition*, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. Now if This be so ; much more may our Saviour's Instructions and Admonitions to his Disciples, be generally understood to be applicable, in proportion, to *All Christians*. His *Prophetical Warnings* do all of them extend even unto the *End of the World* : And his *Directions* to his immediate Followers are usually couched under such Expressions, as were manifestly intended for the Use and Instruction of all intervening Ages, until his coming to Judgment. *Where ever two or three* (says he) *are gathered together in my Name*, Matt. xviii. 20. *there am I in the midst of them*. Wherefore and whensoever the Doctrine of Christ is received and practised according to his directions, in the love of Truth, Righteousness and Peace ; be it in *one Place*, in *one Age* of the world, or in *Another* ; be it by *Many* persons, or by *Few* : *There is the Church of Christ* : To *Them* belong all the glorious Promises, which he has ever made to his Church ; and to *Them* belong all the Warnings which he has given, of Persecutions to be expected from an unrighteous and corrupt World. For This reason, whoever at any time asked him *When* the Kingdom should be restored to *Israel*, or *When* the Kingdom of God should come ; and *When* shall all these things come to pass ; and *What* shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World ? instead of mentioning any particular time, he constantly warned them to watch and to be ready at *all times*. And at the Conclusion of the Prophecy, whereof my Text is a part ; he in express words declares, (as 'tis recorded by St Mark, ch.

xiii.. 37.) *What I say unto You, I say unto ALL, Watch.* And at another time, when his Disciples directly asked him, whether he intended his Discourse in particular to *Them*, or in general to *All* men; *Luke* xii. 41; his Answer is to the very same Purpose. He had been exhorting them, *ver.* 35; *Let your loyns be girded about, and your Lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the Lord.—Blessed are those Servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.—And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the Thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be YE therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* Then Peter said unto him, *Lord, speakest thou this Parable unto Us, or even to All?* And the Lord said, *Who then is that faithful and wise Steward, whom his Lord shall make Ruler over his Household, to give them their portion of Meat in due Season? Blessed is That Servant, whosoever he be, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

2dly, A SECOND Observation arising from what our Lord declares in the Text, is; that the Salvation of Men does not depend upon Any Differences of External Circumstances in the present Life, but intirely upon the Inward Qualifications of their Minds, and upon their Behaviour under the Circumstances wherein the Providence of God has placed them, *whatsoever those Circumstances be.* *I tell you,* says he, *in That Night there shall be two men in One Bed; the One shall be taken, and the Other left.* And when the Disciples asked him, *Where, Lord?* he answers in the Text, under a known Proverbial Expression; *Where ever the Case is alike, the Event will be the*

Same :

*Same: Wheresoever the Body is, thither will the Eagles be gathered together. Not only to those who shall be living at the Time and Place of our Lord's coming to Judgment, but to All Others likewise, at all Times and in all Places, shall This declaration of His be verified: Two men shall be in One Bed; the One shall be taken, and the Other left: By no visible or appearing differences of worldly Circumstances, but merely according to their inward moral Qualifications, shall men finally be distinguished. Not to Those in particular, who shall be found alive at our Lord's Second Coming, does he say, Blessed is That Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing: But his Meaning is, to All in general, in all Times and Places; Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find to have so done. Thus when the Prophet Daniel says, ch. xii. 12. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to—the time of the End: The Meaning is not, Blessed is he that shall happen to live at the time of the end; but, Blessed is he who by Waiting, that is, by * patient continuance in Well-doing, by being constantly upon his guard against the Temptations of an unrighteous and corrupt World, by Keeping Himself (as St John expresses it) so that † That Wicked One toucheth him not; blessed is He who by thus Waiting, shall be found worthy to attain That life which shall be revealed at the End of the days, and to stand before the Son of Man. Many are apt to imagine, if they had lived in some Other Place or Age of the World, if they had been placed under some Other Circumstances than they Are, if they had lived in Our Saviour's days, and at a time when ‡ one rose from the dead; the Principles of Re-*

• Rom. ii. 7. † 1 John v. 18. ‡ Luke xvi. 31.

ligion would have had a very different Effect upon them, from what they *Now* have. But all This is a very great Fallacy : And Experience has shown, that not upon Differences of *Time* and *Place*, but upon the *Moral Disposition* of men's *Hearts* and *Minds*, does the *Influence of religion* entirely depend. The *Jesus* in the *Wilderness* were not at all reformed, even by the *Sight* of numerous *Miracles*. And the *Pharisees* in our *Saviour's* time, who said, *If we had been in the days of our Father, we would not have been partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets* ; did yet, by their *Deeds*, show themselves to be the *Genuine Sons*, and *Underdiscours* of the *Temper* of those who killed the *Prophets*.

3dly and Lastly, *THE* Last Observation I shall draw from this Discourse of our Saviour, of which my Text is the Conclusion ; is, that all the *Marks* or *Notes*, which Those of the Church of *Rome* pretend to give us, of the *True Church* of God ; are such as our Lord here warns his Disciples not to be deceived by. *Christ*, they tell us, is no where to be found but among *Them* : And the *Doctrines* and *Benefits* of the Gospel, can no other way possibly be conveyed to Mankind, than through the particular *Channel* of *Rome*. What is This, but the very thing our Lord here admonishes us to beware of ? * *If any man shall say unto you, Lo, Here is Christ, or There ; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets.* — † *Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the Desert ; go not forth : Behold, he is in the secret Chambers ; believe it not. For as, where-ever the Body is, thither will the Eagles be gathered together ; And as, where ever the Lightning is, there will the Shining of it be the*

* Matt. xxiv. 23, 28.

† Luke xvii. 24, 37.

Same,

Same, from the one part under Heaven, even unto the Other : So also is the Light of the everlasting Gospel, and of the Scripture of Truth.

THUS again: Pretended *Miracles*, in order to establish their *New Doctrines*, and introduce *New Practices* ; What are these, but accomplishments of That prediction of our Lord ; * *There shall arise False Christs and False Prophets, and shall show great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect !*

AGAIN : *Visibility*, or *Worldly Pomp, Grandeur and Authority*, which they make to be Another Note or Mark of the True Church of God ; is directly the Reverse of what our Saviour declared to His Disciples. † *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you ; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my Name's Sake. And, because iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold. § And, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth ?*

MARKS therefore or Notes of the True Church of Christ, in the nature of things, there can be None, but That One essential one, which makes it to be the True Church ; viz. the *Profession and Practice of the Truth* ; the *Profession and Practice of That Doctrine*, which our Lord himself taught, and which his *Apostles* preached and delivered down in Writing to all succeeding generations. With This ; || *where ever Two or Three are gathered together in the name of Christ, There is Christ in the midst of them* ; that is to say, *There is the true Church of God. Without This* ; how Many, and how Great Nations soever, conspire together ; how numerous soever the ‡ *Multitudes* be, which follow each other to do Evil ; 'tis still only a *Set* or *Schism*, 'tis but a *Heresy* or *Worldly Faction*.

* Matt. xxiv. 24. † ver. 9 12. § Luke xviii. 8.

|| Matt. xviii. 20. ‡ Exod. xxiii. 2. S E R.

SERMON XVIII.

Preach'd in the
PARISH - CHURCH
OF
St JAMES's WESTMINSTER,

On Sunday, April 18, 1725.

M A T T. V. 16.

*Let your Light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in Heaven.*

LIGHT, in the first and natural Sense of the word, is That which causes all things to be Seen as they Are, in their True Nature, and in their Proper Colours. 'Tis that which discovers every Secret, which removes every Uncertainty, which detects every Deformity, and opens to us in all their Glory the innumerable and inimitable Beauties of Nature. Hence in the Figurative Sense, whatsoever enables us to discover any Truth, we usually speak of as giving us Light in That matter: For, as the Apostle expresses

expresses it, *Eph. v. 13* ; *whatsoever doth make manifest, is Light*. And because some things, the more they are *inlightned*, the more *Beautiful* they appear ; whereas Other things love to have their *Deformities* concealed in *Darkness* : hence in the *Moral Sense* also, whatever *Actions* or *Persons* are truly *virtuous* and *praise-worthy*, and consequently always the more *valuable* in proportion, as they are more perfectly and thoroughly *known* ; are frequently in *Scripture* styled by the name of *Light*, and the *contrary ones* by that of *Darkness*. Concerning *God himself*, upon account of the infinite *Purity* and *Holiness* of his *Nature*, the *Apostle* thus speaks ; *1 John i. 5* ; *God is LIGHT, and in Him is no Darkness at all*. And to good *Men* likewise, in *their* proportion, is the same manner of speaking applied ; *Eph. v. 8* ; *Ye were sometimes Darkness, but Now are ye LIGHT in the Lord : Walk, as children of Light :—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them*.

AGAIN ; Because all *Luminous Bodies*, in proportion to the degree of their of their *own Brightness*, necessarily diffuse their *Light* around them, and at a *Distance* inlighten all *Other Bodies* ; hence, in the *religious sense*, a *Good Example* is a *Light* shining in darkness ; spreading its influence every way ; diffusing *Instruction*, *Knowledge*, *Encouragement* to *Virtue*, and *Motives* to reformation of *Manners*, in the midst of a dissolute and corrupt *World*. In *This sense* the word is used by *St Paul*, *Phil. ii. 15* ; *That ye may be blameless, and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as LIGHTS in the World*. And in *This sense* 'tis used by our *Saviour* in the
Text ;

Text ; *Let your LIGHT so shine before men. Ye are,* (saith he in the words immediately foregoing, *Ye are*) *the LIGHT of the World : As therefore a City that is set on an hill, cannot be hid ; and as men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth Light unto all that are in the House ; Even so, saith he, let YOUR LIGHT shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven : Let your whole Behaviour be so exemplary, and the Influence of your religion upon your own Lives so conspicuous to the World ; that men being thereby convinced of the Excellency of your doctrine, may by your Preaching be led from Errour to Truth, and be converted by your Example from Wickedness to Virtue*

'TIS well worth observing here, by the way, that This expression of our Saviour, concerning men's *lighting a candle*, and putting it, not under a Bushel, but on a *Candlestick*, so that it *giveth Light unto all that are in the House* ; is the Foundation of that lively and beautiful Image in St John's Vision, where the seven primitive Churches of *Asia* are represented under the similitude of *seven golden Candlesticks* ; and the principal or most eminent persons in those several Churches, as so many *Stars* or *Lights* in those *Candlesticks*, giving Light to the *Whole Temple* or *Catholic Church* of God.

AND This concerning the *nature* of that *figurative* expression, *Let your LIGHT so shine before men.*

THE following words, *that men may see your good works, and GLORIFY your Father which is in Heaven*, are of very plain and obvious Meaning : That by the *Spreading* of your *Doctrine*, and by the *Influence*

ence of your Example, the Practise of true Religion and Goodness may prevail in the World: That men may see the Beauty and Excellency of Virtue, and the infinite Benefit that would arise to mankind from the universal Prevalency of true Religion: That they may be convinced of the necessity of reforming their Manners, and of living under a constant Sense of God upon their Minds, in expectation of a righteous judgment to come. The *Practise of Virtue upon These Principles*, is the Establishment of the Kingdom of God among Men. And in the *Inlargement of this Kingdom of Righteousness and Holiness*, in the *Increase of the Efficacy of Truth and Virtue*, which is the *Proper Subjection of Rational and Free Agents*; in *This* consists the *Glory of God upon Earth*. Thus the *Conversion of Unbelievers*, which St Paul describes by their being convinced, and falling down on their Faces, and worshipping God, 1 Cor. xiv. 24; St Peter expresses by the same Phrase with *This* in the Text, of glorifying God: 1 Pet. ii. 12, *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, GLORIFY GOD in the day of Visitation*. And St John, in his Revelation, uses the expression of mens giving *Glory to God*, and repenting of their evil deeds, as words having one and the same signification; Ch. ix. 20; xvi. 9; *The rest of the men, which were not killed by these plagues, yet REPENTED NOT of — their Murders, nor of their Sorceries, nor of their Fornication, nor of their Thefts; but — blasphemed the Name of God, who hath power over these Plagues; and they REPENTED NOT, to give him GLORY.*

GLORIFYING

GLORIFYING of God therefore, and promoting Righteousness and Truth among Men, being in effect one and the same thing: from hence appears the Reason and the Consistency of our Lord's commanding his Disciples in the Text, to *let their Light shine before men*; and yet exhorting them, in another part of the very same Discourse, *ch. vi. 1, Take heed that ye do NOT your Alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no Reward of your Father which is in Heaven: And, When thou dost thine Alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of Men: Verily, I say unto you, they have their Reward.* The Reason (I say) and the Consistency of Both these Exhortations, appears from the peculiar Considerations annexed to each exhortation respectively. The Same thing, in different Circumstances, is not the Same thing. A Particular good Action, done with a Particular View of vain-glory and popular Applause; ceases to be a religious Action, and falls short of its Reward. The Same Action performed with such a View, and in such a manner, as to have a direct and proper Tendency to promote and encourage the universal Practice of Virtue in the World; is, in the most immediate and real sense of the words, a glorifying of our Father which is in Heaven; 'Tis causing men (as much as in Us lies) to make acknowledgment of God, and to order their Lives as being under a perpetual sense of his Inspection and Government.

EVERY Act of Any Virtue whatsoever, has a natural Tendency to This End; and in general, by habitual good Living, is the Glory of God, in This sense of the phrase, most highly advanced. But Some Virtues in particular, have a more conspicuous Influence towards This End, than Others. And since in That

passage which I now referred to, of the same Sermon of our Lord upon the Mount; 'tis agreed on all hands, that What, in the best Copies of the Original, is, * *Take heed that ye do not your RIGHTEOUSNESS before men*, means undoubtedly, and is accordingly rendered in Our Translation, *Take heed that you do not your ALMS before men*: 'tis very probable that here in my Text likewise, our Lord, under the general terms, *Light and Good Works*, might have a particular regard to Works of *Beneficence and Charity*: Commanding his disciples to make *conspicuous* their Practice of the same Virtue, when their *so doing* might be an Honour to Religion; which, in other Circumstances, he commands them to keep *private*, when its being *publick* would serve only the Purposes of Vain-glory.

AND indeed there is no one Christian virtue, to the Practice of which there are in Scripture given more earnest Exhortations, or more large and repeated Promises, than to This of Charity. *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters; for thou shalt find it after many days*, Eccles. xi. 1. *If thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house: If when thou seest the naked, thou cover him; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh: Then shall thy Light break forth—in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day*, Is. lviii. 7,—10. In like manner, in the New Testament, our Lord exhorts: *When thou makest a Feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the the Blind: And then thou shalt be blessed; For they cannot recompence thee; for thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the Just*, Luke xiv. 13, 14. And in his description of the last judgment, he expresses the sentence of the Blessed thus; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for*

* Matt. vi. 1.

you from the foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, &c. Matt. xxv. 34. And in his discourse to the Pharisees, Luke xi. 41. Give Alms, says he, of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you. His meaning is; not that *Charity*, or *Any* other *Virtue*, will compensate for *vitious* and *immoral* Practices; but that *These* *Virtues* are *really* acceptable before God, in whose Sight the *Pharisaical* ceremonious Purifications were of no Esteem.

IT must and ought here to be acknowledged, to the Honour of the Present Generation, that there appears to be at *This time* among us a number of persons so charitably disposed, and so ready to make a good Use of the Plenty wherewith the Providence of God has blessed them; that, were it possible they could be absolutely certain, their charity should always be *expended* in such ways, and applied to such purposes only, for which it was designed; so as neither to become in any degree an encouragement to *Idleness*, nor a support of any *Party*, nor an occasion of *Pride*, or of raising persons *Above* those Circumstances in which they might be employed most usefully to the Publick: it cannot at all be doubted, but the Supply would immediately be *more* than is requisite, to relieve the truly indigent, and to answer the wants of All who were really unable to provide for the necessities of Life by Honest Labour. But indeed, hardly any thing is more difficult, in an idle and corrupt Age, than for those who have the strongest *Inclinations* as well as the greatest *Abilities* of doing Acts of Beneficence, to find out in *what manner*, and upon *what Objects* in particular, they may best bestow their charitable good Offices; so as that the Use and Benefit of them may be the *most* extensive, and the *least* liable to misapplication or Abuse. Nor is it possible

in This case, to lay down any certain and determinate *Rules*. Every person, as he must of necessity be left to the determination of his own prudence, at *what* particular *Times* and *Places*, and in *what proportions* he will chuse to bestow his Charity; so must he also in judging about the *Manner* of disposing it, and upon *what Objects*, and with *what particular Views* he will principally direct it; that it may more immediately answer the *intention* of the Giver, and may be *most* conducive to the *particular Purposes* he is chiefly desirous to promote. According to the *different Stations* of life men have been employed in, and the *different Scenes* of humane affairs they have seen in the World; they are apt naturally in consequence to frame to themselves very different notions, what *Kinds* of charities will in the whole be most useful to the Publick, and most likely to answer the general Intention with Success. In *every* Method that *bas* or *can be* proposed, when considered under *different Views and Regards*, it cannot be otherwise, but that *Each one* will be found *liable* in *Some Respects* to more Objections than others, and in *Some* to fewer. *What-ever* Way be taken, and *whatever* care and circumspection men use, in the disposal of their Charity; it will always be possible, that the End they propose to themselves shall not be fully answered; And in *no way* can there be any certain and absolute security, that every sort of miscarriage shall be prevented. That which of all other methods seems, upon the whole, to have the *Advantage* in *most respects*; as being most *extensive* in its *Influence*, and *lasting* in its *Effects*; subject to the *Fewest Inconveniencies*, and *those* from time to time the most easily remedied; is the *Education of Poor Children*. Which, when put in a right method, and directed in a right and proper manner;

manner ; is in effect a Compendium of almost every fort and kind of Charity, of almost all the several and most different Instances of Beneficence in One. 'Tis, at the same time, both Feeding the Hungry, and cloathing the Naked with a Garment. 'Tis instructing the Ignorant in the first principles of Religion, and promoting a general Sense and Knowledge of God in the World. 'Tis sowing early the Seeds of Virtue and good Manners, and preventing the first Beginnings of those vicious Habits, which, when they have taken root by Custom and long Practice, seldom Any Zeal for reformation of Manners is ever after able to correct. 'Tis, when joined with putting them upon works of *Labour* and *Industry*, as it ought always to be ; 'tis then (I say) a remedy against all the ill Effects of Idleness and Poverty, and (by a *Double Benefit* (making Those to become Useful Members of the Publick, who would otherwise have been a Burden and a Weight upon it. In a word, 'tis at once relieving the necessities of the Present Generation, and (as far as Humane Care and Foresight can extend,) preventing the Wants of Those which are to come. To *This sort* of Charity therefore, (whenever there is *reasonable* Ground to hope it will be duly applied to the Purposes now mentioned,) we are exhorted by *All* those arguments in *conjunction*, which *singly* incite us to be beneficent in Any of the particular Instances. To this we are invited by all the Considerations of Publick Benefit, and by all the Motives and Arguments of Religion. To This we are encouraged by the united Force of all those Promises *at once*, which in Scripture are made, on many *different* occasions, to the *several* methods of showing mercy and charity.

It has upon some occasions been observed, and perhaps not always wholly without reason ; that the children

children of the *Meanest* parents, sustained, educated, and instructed merely upon the Charity of Others; have sometimes in consequence of these Advantages, and upon account of This very instruction, been tempted to become *conceited* and *vain*, and *Above* being employed in those *Meaner Services*, which are of all others the *most necessary*, and at the same time the *most useful* to the Publick: And sometimes that they have become liable to be led away into *Factions*, which being frequently founded upon Pretences of Religion, do find very great Support from whatever is capable of being changed into the *Ceremonies* and *Formalities* of *Superstition*. In order to remedy, as far as possible, these Inconveniencies, and to turn Objects of Charity into useful Members of the Publick; to instruct them in the plainest Principles of Sobriety and Virtue; and to inure them to Labour and Industry, which is the Great Support of every Nation; it has been resolved that the poor Children to be supported by *your* Charity, shall for the future (and the Design is already begun actually to be put in execution) be employed the greatest part of their time in such *Kinds of Work*, as may qualify them for the *lower* and *most necessary Services* of Life. And to this End provision has been made, that they shall *not only* be *cloathed* and *taught* as formerly, but that they shall be furnished moreover with *Food* and *Lodging*; that, being constantly kept together in a Place of *Work* and Employment, the proposed Intention may be more effectually answered; and the Inconveniencies, which it has perhaps not unjustly been apprehended would follow upon their being raised *Above* their proper Station, we may reasonably *hope*, will in great measure be prevented.

ONE evident and very obvious good effect of This
Method,

Method, is; that whereas, when children have only been *Taught* in Schools, it too often happens that by returning constantly home to their Parents or Relations, the Principles of Religion and good Manners wherein they have been instructed, have from time to time been as it were *extinguished* by the influence of *ill Examples*, and over-powered by the continual Sight of *vicious Practices*; they will Now, as far as possible, be kept out of that danger of being led away by ill Example; and, in a good degree, out of the reach of the contagion, of the most profligate and dissolute part of the World. For Vice is not *natural* to mankind, but taught by ill Education and corrupt Examples, confirmed by Custom and Habit, and Then indeed very hard to be rooted out by the strongest Arguments or by the wisest Instructions. For, that which has long been *crooked*, will not easily be made *streight*; and that which is *wanting*, cannot be *numbered*, Eccl. i. 15. But if young persons can from the Beginning be kept out of ill Company, and be taught only the *plain* Principles of Religion and Virtue, and be inured to *Industry* and moderate *Labour*; they will easily be formed to *Habits* of Sobriety and Modesty, to a sense of the reasonableness of virtuous Living, and to a Hatred of those vicious and debauched Practices, which bring so great a part of Mankind *visibly* to *Temporal* and too certainly to *Eternal* Destruction.

AND whereas *Poor Orphans particularly*, who are left wholly destitute of Friends and Relations, are apt to be exposed not only to the Disadvantages of ignorance and want of instruction, and to the seducements of ill Company in the worst and lowest part of a loose and degenerate World, but very frequently also to lie under the greatest *Temporal* Wants, and be subject to such a Variety of *Hardships* and *Oppressions*, as often
render

render them almost *incapable* of Any useful Employ-
ment in the World: By the Method now proposed,
These Objects in particular, as they will probably be
more *Willing than Others* to submit to such a manner
of Education as may best fit them for the *meanest* and
most necessary *Services*, so *These* ('tis likely) will be
the *principal and most numerous* Sharers in your present
Beneficence. Which is one not inconsiderable additi-
onal recommendation of the design of turning Charity
into this particular Channel.

THE Provision now made for accommodating the
poor children with *Food and Lodging*, who before
were only *Clothed and Taught*; must indeed of ne-
cessity cause a considerable *Increase* of the Annual Ex-
pence. But if there be good reason to *hope*, (as there
plainly is in the Nature of the Thing,) that the Ac-
cession of *Usefulness to the Charity* by this method, will
in proportion be greater than the *Increase of the Ex-
pence*; this is a very just argument to prevail with
well-disposed persons, to enlarge their contributions.

* Every man, according as he purposes in his heart,
so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for
God loveth a cheerful Giver.——As it is written;
he hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his
righteousness remaineth for ever.——Being enriched
in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth thro'
Us Thanksgiving to God. For the administration of
This Service, not only supplieth the Wants of the Saints,
but is abundant also by many Thanksgivings unto God:
Whilst by the experiment of this ministrations, they glo-
rify God for your professed Subjection unto the Gospel of
Christ, and for your liberal Distribution unto Them,
and unto all Men.

